The Collected Novels and Stories of Guy de Maupassant

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THAT PIG, MORIN
AND OTHER STORIES

The Collected Novels and Stories of Guy de Maupassant

Translated and Edited by Ernest Boyd

That Pig Morin

and

Other Stories

by

Guy de Maupassant

New York
Alfred A. Knopf
1923

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Published, March, 1923

Composition, electrotyping, presswork and binding by
The Plimpton Press, Norwood, Mass.
Paper furnished by W. F. Etherington & Co., New York

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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THAT PIG, MORIN

I

LOOK here," I said to Labarbe, "you have again repeated those words, 'That pig, Morin.' Why on earth do I never hear Morin's name mentioned without his being called *a pig?*"

Labarbe, who has since become a Deputy, blinked at me like an owl and said: "Do you mean to say that you do not know Morin's story, and yet you come from La Rochelle?" I confessed that I did not know Morin's story, and then Labarbe rubbed his hands, and began his narrative.

"You knew Morin, did you not, and you remember his large drapery shop on the Quai de la Rochelle?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"Well, you must know that in 1862 or '63 Morin went to spend a fortnight in Paris for pleasure, or for his pleasures, but under the pretext of renewing his stock, and you also know what a fortnight in Paris means for a country shopkeeper; it fires his blood. The theatre every evening, women brushing up against you, and a continual state of mental excitement; it drives one mad. One sees nothing but dancers in tights, actresses in very low dresses, round legs, plump shoulders, all nearly within reach of one's hands, without daring or being able to touch them. It is rare for one to have even an affair or two with the commoner sort. And one leaves with heart still

a-flutter, and a mind still exhilarated by a sort of longing for kisses which tickle one's lips.

"Morin was in that state when he took his ticket for La Rochelle by the 8.40 night express. Full of regrets and longings he was walking up and down the big waiting-room at the station, when he suddenly came to a halt in front of a young lady who was kissing an old one. She had her veil up, and Morin murmured with delight: 'By Jove, what a beautiful woman!'

"When she had said 'Good-bye' to the old lady, she went into the waiting-room, and Morin followed her; then she went on to the platform and Morin still followed her; then she got into an empty carriage, and he again followed her. There were very few travellers by the express, the engine whistled, and the train started. They were alone. Morin devoured her with his eyes. She appeared to be about nineteen or twenty, and was fair, tall, and had an emancipated air. She wrapped a travelling rug round her legs and stretched herself on the seat to sleep.

"Morin wondered who she was. And a thousand conjectures, a thousand projects went through his mind. He said to himself: 'So many stories are told of adventures on railway journeys, maybe I am going to have one. Who knows? An affair of this kind can take place so quickly. Perhaps all that I need is a little courage. Was it not Danton who said: "Audacity, more audacity, and always audacity"? If it was not Danton, it was Mirabeau. Anyhow, what does that matter? But then, I am lacking in courage, and that is the difficulty. Oh! if one only

knew, if one could only read people's minds! I will bet that every day one misses magnificent opportunities without knowing it. The slightest sign would be enough to let me know that she is perfectly agreeable . . .'

"Then he imagined combinations which led him to triumph. He pictured some chivalrous deed, or merely some slight service which he rendered her, a lively, gallant conversation which ended in a declaration, which ended in — in what you can guess.

"But he could find no opening; he had no pretext, and he waited for some fortunate circumstance, with his heart wildly beating, and his mind topsy-turvy. The night passed, and the pretty girl still slept, while Morin was meditating her downfall. The day broke and soon the first ray of sunlight appeared in the sky, a long, clear ray which shone on the face of the sleeping girl, and woke her, so she sat up, looked at the country, then at Morin, and smiled. She smiled like a happy woman, with an engaging and bright look, and Morin trembled. Obviously that smile was intended for him, it was a discreet invitation, the signal which he was waiting for. That smile meant: 'How stupid, what a ninny, what a dolt, what a donkey you are, to have sat there on your seat like a stick all night.

"'Just look at me. Am I not charming? And you have sat like that for a whole night, alone with a pretty woman, without venturing to do anything, you great booby!'

"She was still smiling as she looked at him; she even began to laugh; and he was losing his head trying to find something suitable to say, no matter

what. But he could think of nothing, nothing, and then, arming himself with Dutch courage, he said to himself: 'It can't be helped, I will risk everything,' and suddenly without the slightest warning, he moved towards her, his arms extended, his lips protruding, and seizing her in his arms, kissed her.

"She sprang up with a bound, shouting: 'Help! help!' and screaming with terror; then she opened the carriage door, and waved her arm outside, mad with fear and trying to jump out, while Morin, who was almost distracted, and feeling sure that she would throw herself out, held her by her skirt and stammered: 'Oh! Madame! Oh! Madame!'

"The train slackened speed, and then stopped. Two guards rushed up at the young woman's frantic signals, and she threw herself into their arms, stammering: 'That man tried — tried — to — to —'

"And then she fainted.

"They were at Mauzé station, and the gendarme on duty arrested Morin. When the victim of his brutality had regained her consciousness, she made her charge against him, and the police drew it up. The poor draper did not reach home till night, with a prosecution hanging over him for an outrage on morals in a public place.

II

"At that time I was editor-in-chief of the 'Fanal des Charentes,' and I used to meet Morin every day at the Café du Commerce. The day after his adventure he came to see me, as he did not know what to do. I did not conceal my opinion from him.

'You are no better than a pig. No decent man behaves like that.'

"He wept. His wife had given him a beating, and he foresaw his trade ruined, his name dragged through the mire and dishonoured, his friends outraged and cutting him in the street. In the end he excited my pity, and I sent for my colleague Rivet, a bantering but very sensible little man, to give us his advice.

"He advised me to see the Public Prosecutor, who was a friend of mine, and so I sent Morin home, and went to call on the magistrate. He told me that the woman who had been insulted was a young lady, Mademoiselle Henriette Bonnel, who had just received her certificate as a teacher in Paris, and who, being an orphan, spent her holidays with her uncle and aunt, who were very respectable lower middle-class people in Mauzé. What made Morin's case all the more serious was, that the uncle had lodged a complaint. But the public official consented to let the matter drop if this complaint were withdrawn, so that we must try and get him to do this.

"I went back to Morin's and found him in bed, ill with excitement and distress. His wife, a tall, raw-boned woman with a beard, was abusing him continually, and she showed me into the room, shouting at me: 'So you have come to see that pig, Morin. Well, there he is, the beauty!' And she planted herself in front of the bed, with her hands on her hips. I told him how matters stood, and he begged me to go and see her uncle and aunt. It was a delicate mission, but I undertook it, and the poor devil never ceased repeating: 'I assure you I did

not even kiss her, no, not even that. I will take my oath on it!'

"I replied: 'It doesn't matter; you are nothing but a pig.' And I took a thousand francs which he gave me, to employ them as I thought best, but as I did not care to venture to the house of her relations alone, I begged Rivet to go with me, which he agreed to do, on condition that we should go there at once, for he had some urgent business at La Rochelle the following afternoon. So two hours later we rang at the door of a nice country-house. A beautiful girl came and opened the door to us, who was assuredly the young lady in question, and I said to Rivet in a low voice: 'Confound it! I begin to understand Morin!'

"The uncle, Monsieur Tonnelet, was, as it happened, a subscriber to the 'Fanal,' and was a fervent political co-religionist of ours. He received us with open arms, and congratulated us and wished us joy; he was delighted at having the two editors of his favourite newspaper in his house, and Rivet whispered to me: 'I think we shall be able to arrange the affair of that pig, Morin.'

"The niece had left the room, and I introduced the delicate subject. I invoked the spectre of scandal before his eyes; I emphasised the inevitable loss of esteem which the young lady would suffer if such an affair became known, for nobody would believe in a simple kiss. The good man seemed undecided, but could not make up his mind about anything without his wife, who would not be in until late that evening. But suddenly he uttered an exclamation of triumph: 'Look here, I have an excellent idea.

I shall not let you leave now that you are here. You can both dine here and spend the night, and when my wife comes home, I hope we shall be able to arrange matters.'

"Rivet resisted at first, but the wish to extricate that pig, Morin, decided him, and we accepted the invitation. So the uncle got up delighted, called his niece, and proposed that we should take a stroll in his grounds, saying: 'We will leave serious matters until to-night.' Rivet and he began to talk politics, and I soon found myself lagging a little behind with the girl, who was really charming! charming! and with infinite precautions I began to speak to her about her adventure, and try to make her my ally. She did not, however, appear in the least confused, and listened to me with an air of great amusement.

"I said to her: 'Just think, Mademoiselle, how unpleasant it will be for you. You will have to appear in court, to encounter malicious glances, to speak before everybody, and to relate in public that unfortunate occurrence in the railway-carriage. Do you not think, between ourselves, that it would have been much better for you to have put that dirty scoundrel in his place without calling for assistance, and merely to have changed your carriage?'

"She began to laugh, and replied: 'What you say is quite true! but what could I do? I was frightened, and when one is frightened, one does not stop to reason with oneself. As soon as I realized the situation, I was very sorry that I had called out, but then it was too late. You must also remember that the idiot threw himself upon me like a madman, without

saying a word and looking like a lunatic. I did not even know what he wanted of me.'

"She looked me full in the face, without being nervous or intimidated, and I said to myself: 'She is a girl with her wits about her: I can quite see how that pig, Morin, came to make a mistake,' and I went on, jokingly: 'Come, Mademoiselle, confess that he was excusable, for after all, a man cannot find himself opposite such a pretty girl as you are, without feeling a legitimate desire to kiss her.'

"She laughed more than ever, and showed her teeth, and said: 'Between the desire and the act, Monsieur, there is room for respect.' It was a curious expression to use, although not very clear. Abruptly I asked: 'Well now, supposing I were to kiss you now, what would you do?' She stopped, looked at me up and down, and then said calmly: 'Oh! you? That is quite another matter.'

"I knew perfectly well, by Jove, that it was not the same thing at all, as everybody in the neighbourhood called me 'Handsome Labarbe.' I was thirty years old in those days, but I asked her: 'And why, pray?'

"She shrugged her shoulders, and replied: 'Well! because you are not so stupid as he is.' And then she added, with a sidelong glance: 'Nor so ugly, either.'

"Before she could make a movement to avoid me, I had planted a hearty kiss on her cheek. She sprang aside, but it was too late, and then she said: 'Well, you are not very bashful, either! But don't do that sort of thing again.'

"I put on a humble look and said in a low voice: 'Oh! Mademoiselle, as for me, if I long for one thing

more than another, it is to be summoned before a magistrate on the same charge as Morin.'

"'Why?' she asked.

"Looking steadily at her, I replied: 'Because you are one of the most beautiful creatures living; because it would be an honour and a title to glory for me to have offered you violence, and because people would have said, after seeing you: "Well, Labarbe richly deserves what he has got, but he is a lucky fellow, all the same."'

"She began to laugh heartily again, and said: 'How funny you are!' And she had not finished the word *funny*, before I had her in my arms and was showering hungry kisses wherever I could find a place, on her hair, her forehead, her eyes, her mouth occasionally, on her cheeks, in fact, all over her head, some part of which she was obliged to leave exposed, in spite of herself, in order to defend the others. At last she managed to release herself, blushing and angry. 'You are very ill-mannered, Monsieur,' she said, 'and I am sorry I listened to you.'

"I took her hand in some confusion, and stammered out: 'I beg your pardon, I beg your pardon, Mademoiselle. I have offended you; I have acted like a brute! Do not be angry with me for what I have done. If you knew —'

"I vainly sought for some excuse, and in a few moments she said: 'There is nothing for me to know, Monsieur.' But I had found something to say, and I cried: 'Mademoiselle, I have been in love with you for a whole year!'

"She was really surprised, and raised her eyes to look at me, and I went on: 'Yes, Mademoiselle,

listen to me. I do not know Morin, and I do not care anything about him. It does not matter to me in the least if he is committed for trial and locked up meanwhile. I saw you here last year; you were down there at the gate, and I was so taken with you, that the thought of you has never left me since, and it does not matter to me whether you believe me or not. I thought you adorable, and the remembrance of you took such a hold on me that I longed to see you again, and so I made use of that fool, Morin, as a pretext, and here I am. Circumstances have made me exceed the due limits of respect, and I can only beg you to pardon me.'

"She was trying to read the truth in my eyes, and was ready to smile again; then she murmured: 'You humbug!' But I raised my hand, and said in a sincere voice (and I really believe that I was sincere): 'I swear to you that I am speaking the truth.' She replied quite simply: 'Really?'

"We were alone, quite alone, as Rivet and her uncle had disappeared in a side walk, and I made her a real declaration of love, prolonged and gentle, while I squeezed and kissed her fingers, and she listened to it as to something new and agreeable, without exactly knowing how much of it she was to believe, while in the end I felt agitated, and at last really myself believed what I said. I was pale, anxious, and trembling, and I gently put my arm round her waist, and spoke to her softly, whispering into the little curls over her ears. She seemed dead, so absorbed in thought was she.

"Then her hand touched mine, and she pressed it, and I gently circled her waist with a trembling, and

gradually a firmer, grasp. She did not move now, and I touched her cheeks with my lips, and suddenly, without seeking them, mine met hers. It was a long, long kiss, and it would have lasted longer still, if I had not heard 'Ahem, ahem' just behind me. She made her escape through the bushes, and I, turning round, saw Rivet coming toward me. He stopped in the middle of the path and said without even smiling: 'So that is the way in which you settle the affair of that pig, Morin.'

"I replied, conceitedly: 'One does what one can, my dear fellow. But what about the uncle? How have you got on with him? I will answer for the niece.'

"'I have not been so fortunate with him,' he replied. Whereupon I took his arm, and we went indoors.

III

"Dinner made me lose my head altogether. I sat beside her, and my hand continually met hers under the tablecloth, my foot touched hers, and our glances met and melted together.

"After dinner we took a walk by moonlight, and I whispered to her all the tender things that rose in my heart. I held her close to me, embracing her every moment, and pressing my lips against hers. Her uncle and Rivet were arguing as they walked in front of us, their shadows following solemnly behind them on the sandy paths. We went in, and soon a messenger brought a telegram from her aunt, saying that she would not return until the first train the next morning, at seven o'clock.

"'Very well, Henriette,' her uncle said, 'go and show the gentlemen their rooms.' She showed Rivet his first, and he whispered to me: 'There was no danger of her taking us into yours first.' Then she took me to my room, and as soon as she was alone with me, I took her in my arms again and tried to excite her senses and overcome her resistance, but when she felt that she was near succumbing, she escaped out of the room, and I got between the sheets, very much put out and excited, and feeling rather foolish, for I knew that I should not sleep much. I was wondering how I could have committed such a mistake, when there was a gentle knock at my door, and on my asking who was there, a low voice replied: 'I.'

"I dressed myself quickly and opened the door, and she came in. 'I forgot to ask you what you take in the morning,' she said, 'chocolate, tea, or coffee?' I put my arms around her impetuously and said, devouring her with kisses: 'I will take — I will take —' But she freed herself from my arms, blew out my candle, and disappeared, and left me alone in the dark, furious, trying to find some matches and not able to do so. At last I got some and I went into the passage, feeling half mad, with my candlestick in my hand.

"What was I going to do? I did not stop to think, I only wanted to find her, and I would. I went a few steps without reflecting, but then I suddenly thought to myself: 'Suppose I should go into the uncle's room, what should I say?' And I stood still, with my head a void, and my heart beating.

"But in a few moments, I thought of an answer: 'Of course, I shall say that I was looking for Rivet's room, to speak to him about an important matter,' and I began to inspect all the doors, trying to find hers. At random I took hold of a key, turned it, the door opened and I went in. There was Henriette, sitting on her bed and looking at me in terror. So I gently pushed the bolt, and going up to her on tiptoe, I said: 'I forgot to ask you for something to read, Mademoiselle.' She struggled, but I soon opened the book I was looking for. I will not tell you its title, but it is the most wonderful of romances, the divinest of poems. And when once I had turned the first page, she let me turn over as many leaves as I liked, and I got through so many chapters that our candles were quite burned out.

"Then, after thanking her, I was stealthily returning to my room, when a rough hand seized me, and a voice — it was Rivet's — whispered in my ear: 'Are you still settling the affair of that pig, Morin?'

"At seven o'clock the next morning, she herself brought me a cup of chocolate. I have never drunk anything like it, soft, velvety, perfumed, intoxicating, a chocolate to make one swoon with pleasure. I could scarcely take away my mouth from the delicious lips of her cup. She had hardly left the room when Rivet came in. He seemed nervous and irritable like a man who had not slept, and he said to me crossly: 'If you go on like this, you will end by spoiling the affair of that pig, Morin!'

"At eight o'clock the aunt arrived. Our discussion was very short, the good people withdrew their complaint, and I left five hundred francs for

the poor of the town. They wanted to keep us for the day, and they arranged an excursion to go and see some ruins. Henriette made signs to me to stay, behind her uncle's back, and I accepted, but Rivet was determined to go. I took him aside, and begged and prayed him: 'Come on, old man, do it for my sake.' He appeared quite exasperated and kept saying to me: 'I have had enough of that pig Morin's affair, do you hear?'

"Of course I was obliged to go also, and it was one of the hardest moments of my life. I could have gone on settling that business as long as I lived, and when we were in the railway carriage, after shaking hands with her in silence, I said to Rivet: 'You are a mere brute!' And he replied: 'My dear fellow, you were beginning to get on my nerves confoundedly.'

"On getting to the 'Fanal' office, I saw a crowd waiting for us, and as soon as they saw us, they all exclaimed: 'Well, have you settled the affair of that pig, Morin?' All La Rochelle was excited about it, and Rivet, who had got over his ill humour on the journey, had great difficulty in keeping himself from laughing as he said: 'Yes, we have managed it, thanks to Labarbe.' And we went to Morin's.

"He was sitting in an armchair, with mustard plasters on his legs, and cold bandages on his head, nearly dead with misery. He was coughing incessantly with the short cough of a dying man, without any one knowing how he had caught this cold, and his wife seemed like a tigress ready to eat him. As soon as he saw us he trembled so violently as to make his hands and knees shake, so I said to him

immediately: 'It is all settled, you dirty scamp, but don't do such a thing again.'

"He got up, choking, took my hands and kissed them as if they had belonged to a prince, cried, nearly fainted, embraced Rivet, and even kissed Madame Morin, who gave him a push that sent him staggering back into his armchair. But he never got over the blow: his mind had been too upset. In all the country round, moreover, he was called nothing but 'that pig, Morin,' and the epithet went through him like a sword-thrust every time he heard it. When a street-boy called after him: 'Pig!' he turned his head instinctively. His friends also overwhelmed him with horrible jokes, and used to chaff him, whenever they were eating ham, by saying: 'Is this a bit of you?' He died two years later.

"As for myself, when I was a candidate for the Chamber of Deputies in 1875, I called on the new notary at Tousserre, Monsieur Belloncle, to solicit his vote, and a tall, handsome, richly-dressed woman received me. 'Don't you remember me?' she said.

"I stammered out: 'No . . . No . . . Madame.'

"'Henriette Bonnel?'

"'Ah!' And I felt myself turning pale, while she seemed perfectly at her ease, and looked at me with a smile.

"As soon as she had left me alone with her husband, he took both of my hands, and squeezing them as if he meant to crush them, he said: 'I have been intending to go and see you for a long time, my dear sir, for my wife has very often talked to me

about you. I know under what painful circumstances you made her acquaintance, and I know also how perfectly you behaved, how full of delicacy, tact, and devotion you showed yourself in the affair —' He hesitated, and then said in a lower tone, as if he had been saying something low and coarse: 'In the affair of that pig, Morin.'"

THE SNIPE

FOR forty years old Baron des Ravots had been the champion sportsman of his province. But a stroke of paralysis had kept him in his chair for the last five or six years. He could now only shoot pigeons from the window of his drawing-room or from the top of the great flight of steps in front of his house. He spent the rest of his time in reading.

He was a good-natured business man, who had much of the literary spirit of the past century. He loved anecdotes, little risqué anecdotes, true stories of events that happened in his neighbourhood. As soon as a friend came to see him he would ask:

"Well, anything new?"

And he knew how to cross-examine like a lawyer.

On sunny days he had his large armchair, which was like a bed, wheeled to the hall door. A servant behind him held his guns, loaded them and handed them to his master. Another valet, hidden in the bushes, let fly a pigeon from time to time at irregular intervals, so that the baron should be unprepared and be always on the watch.

And from morning till night he fired at the birds, much annoyed if he were taken by surprise and laughing till he cried when the animal fell straight to the earth or turned over in some comical and unexpected manner. He would turn to the man who

was loading the gun and say, almost choking with laughter:

"Did that get him, Joseph? Did you see how he fell?" Joseph invariably replied:

"Oh, Monsieur le Baron never misses them."

In autumn, when the shooting season opened, he invited his friends as he had done formerly, and loved to hear them firing in the distance. He counted the shots and was pleased when they followed each other rapidly. And in the evening he made each guest give a faithful account of his day. They remained three hours at table telling about their sport.

They were strange and improbable adventures in which the loquacious temper of the sportsmen delighted. Some of them were already historical stories and were repeated regularly. The story of a rabbit that little Vicomte de Bourril had missed in his hall convulsed them with laughter each year anew. Every five minutes a fresh speaker would say:

"I heard 'birr! birr!' and a magnificent covey rose at ten paces from me. I aimed. Bang! Bang! and I saw a shower, a veritable shower of birds. There were seven of them!"

And they all went into raptures, amazed, but reciprocally credulous.

But there was an old custom in the house called "The Story of the Snipe."

Whenever this queen of birds was in season the same ceremony took place at each dinner. As they loved this incomparable bird, each guest ate one every evening, but the heads were all left in the dish.

Then the baron, acting the part of a bishop, had a plate brought to him containing a little fat, and

he carefully anointed the precious heads, holding them by the tip of their slender, needle-like beaks. A lighted candle was placed beside him and every one was silent in an anxiety of expectation.

Then he took one of the heads thus prepared, stuck a pin through it and stuck the pin on a cork, keeping the whole contrivance steady by means of little crossed sticks, and carefully balanced this object on the neck of a bottle like a sort of turnstile.

All the guests counted simultaneously in a loud tone:

"One — two — three."

And the baron with a flip of his finger made this toy whirl round.

The guest at whom the long beak pointed when the head stopped became the possessor of all the heads, a feast fit for a king, which made his neighbours look envious.

He took them one by one and toasted them over the candle. The grease sputtered, the roasting flesh smoked and the lucky winner ate the head, holding it by the beak and uttering exclamations of enjoyment.

And at each head the diners, raising their glasses, drank to his health.

When he had finished the last head he was obliged, at the baron's orders, to tell an anecdote to compensate the disappointed ones.

Here are some of the stories.

THE MAD WOMAN

THAT reminds me of a terrible story of the Franco-Prussian war (said Monsieur d'Endolin). You know my house in the faubourg de Cormeil. I was living there when the Prussians came, and I had for a neighbour a kind of mad woman, who had lost her senses in consequence of a series of misfortunes, as at the age of twenty-five she had lost her father, her husband and her newly born child, all in the space of a month.

When death has once entered a house, it almost invariably returns immediately, as if it knew the way, and the young woman, overwhelmed with grief, took to her bed and was delirious for six weeks. Then, a species of calm lassitude succeeded that violent crisis, and she remained motionless, eating next to nothing, and only moving her eyes. Every time they tried to make her get up, she screamed as if they were about to kill her, and so they ended by leaving her continually in bed, and only taking her out to wash her, to change her linen and to turn her mattress.

An old servant remained with her, who gave her something to drink, or a little cold meat, from time to time. What was happening in that anguished mind? No one ever knew, for she never spoke again. Was she thinking of the dead? Was she dreaming sadly, without any precise recollection of anything

that had happened? Or was her stunned memory as still as stagnant water? For fifteen years she remained thus inert and secluded.

The war broke out, and in the beginning of December the Germans came to Cormeil. I can remember it as if it were but yesterday. It was freezing hard enough to split the stones, and I, myself, was lying back in an armchair, being unable to move on account of the gout, when I heard their heavy and regular tread; I could see them pass, from my window.

They marched past interminably, with that peculiar motion of a puppet on wires which is peculiar to them. Then the officers billeted their men on the inhabitants, and I had seventeen of them. My neighbour, the mad woman, had a dozen, one of whom was a major, a regular, violent, surly swash-buckler.

During the first few days everything went on swimmingly. The officer next door had been told that the lady was ill, and he did not pay any attention to that in the least, but soon this woman, whom they never saw, irritated him. He asked what her illness was, and was told that she had been in bed for fifteen years, in consequence of terrible grief. No doubt he did not believe it, and thought that the poor mad creature would not leave her bed out of pride, so that she might not come near the Prussians, nor speak to them, nor even see them.

He insisted upon her receiving him, and he was shown into the room, and said to her roughly: "I must beg you to get up, Madame, and to come downstairs so that we may all see you," but she merely

turned her vague eyes on him, without replying, and so he continued: "I do not intend to tolerate any insolence, and if you do not get up of your own accord, I can easily find means to make you walk without any assistance."

But she did not give any signs of having heard him, and remained quite motionless, and then he got furious, as he took that calm silence for a mark of supreme contempt, and so he added: "If you do not come downstairs to-morrow . . ." And then he left the room.

The next day the terrified old servant tried to dress her, but the mad woman began to scream violently, and resisted with all her might. The officer ran upstairs quickly, and the servant threw herself at his feet and cried: "She will not come down, monsieur, she will not. Forgive her, for she is so unhappy."

The soldier was embarrassed, as in spite of his anger, he did not venture to order his soldiers to drag her out, but suddenly he began to laugh, and gave some orders in German, and soon a party of soldiers was seen coming out supporting a mattress as if they were carrying a wounded man. On that bed, which had not been unmade, the mad woman, who was still silent, was lying quietly, for she was quite indifferent to anything that went on, as long as they let her lie. Behind her, a soldier was carrying a bundle of feminine attire, and the officer said, rubbing his hands: "We will just see whether you cannot dress yourself alone, and take a little walk."

And then the procession went off in the direction of the forest of Imauville; in two hours the soldiers

came back alone, and nothing more was seen of the mad woman. What had they done with her? Where had they taken her to? No one ever knew.

The snow was falling day and night, and enveloped the plain and the woods in a shroud of frozen foam, and the wolves came and howled at our very doors.

The thought of that poor lost woman haunted me, and I made several applications to the Prussian authorities in order to obtain some information, and was nearly shot for doing so. When spring returned, the army of occupation withdrew, but my neighbour's house remained closed; the grass grew thick in the garden walks. The old servant had died during the winter, and nobody troubled any longer about that affair; I alone thought about it constantly. What had they done with the woman? Had she escaped through the forest? Had somebody found her, and taken her to a hospital, without being able to obtain any information from her? Nothing happened to relieve my doubts; but, by degrees, time assuaged my anxiety.

Well, in the following autumn the woodcock were very plentiful, and as I had some respite from my gout, I dragged myself as far as the forest. I had already killed four or five of the long-billed birds, when I knocked over one which fell into a ditch full of branches, and I was obliged to get into it, in order to pick it up, and I found that it had fallen beside a human skull, and immediately the recollection of the mad woman struck me, like a blow in the chest. Many other people had perhaps died in the wood

during that disastrous year. I do not know why, yet I was sure, sure, I tell you, that I had stumbled upon the head of that wretched maniac.

And suddenly I understood, I guessed everything. They had abandoned her on that mattress in the cold, deserted wood; and, faithful to her obsession, she had allowed herself to perish under that thick and light counterpane of snow, without moving an arm or a leg.

Then the wolves had devoured her, and the birds had built their nests with the wool from her torn bed. I took charge of her remains, and I only pray that our sons may never see war again.

THE WILL

I KNEW that tall young fellow, René de Bourneval. He was an agreeable companion, though rather melancholy, and disillusioned about everything, very sceptical, with a scepticism which was direct and devastating, and especially skilful in exposing social hypocrisies in a biting phrase. He often used to say:

"There are no honest men, or, at least, they only appear so in comparison with swine."

He had two brothers, whom he shunned, the Messieurs de Courcils. I thought they were by another father, on account of the difference in the name. I had frequently heard that something strange had happened in the family, but no details were given.

As I took a great liking to him, we soon became intimate, and one evening, when I had been dining with him alone, I asked him by chance: "Are you by your mother's first or second marriage?" He grew rather pale; then he flushed, and did not speak for a few moments; he was visibly embarrassed. Then he smiled in that melancholy and gentle manner peculiar to him, and said:

"My dear friend, if it will not bore you, I can tell you some very strange details about my life. I know you to be a sensible man, so I am not afraid

that our friendship will suffer by my revelations, and if it did, I should not care about having you for my friend any longer.

"My mother, Madame de Courcils, was a poor, timid, little woman, whom her husband had married for the sake of her fortune. Her whole life was a martyrdom. Of an affectionate, timorous and sensitive nature, she was constantly ill-treated by the man who ought to have been my father, one of those boors called country gentlemen. A month after their marriage he was living with a servant, and besides that, the wives and daughters of his tenants were his mistresses, which did not prevent him from having two children by his wife, three, if you count me. My mother said nothing, and lived in that noisy house like one of those little mice which slip under the furniture. Self-effacing, retiring and nervous, she looked at people with bright, uneasy, restless eyes, the eyes of some terrified creature which can never shake off its fear. And yet she was pretty, very pretty and fair, a grey blonde, as if her hair had lost its colour through her constant fears.

"Among Monsieur de Courcils's friends who constantly came to the château there was an ex-cavalry officer, a widower, a man to be feared, a man at the same time tender and violent, and capable of the most energetic resolution, Monsieur de Bourneval, whose name I bear. He was a tall, thin man, with a heavy black mustache, and I am very like him. He was a man who had read a great deal, and whose ideas were not like those of most of his class. His great-grandmother had been a friend of J. J. Rousseau, and it seemed as if he had inherited something from this

connection of his ancestor's. He knew the 'Contrat Social' and the 'Nouvelle Héloïse' by heart, and, indeed, all those philosophical books which led the way to the overthrow of our old usage, prejudices, superannuated laws, and imbecile morality.

"It seemed that he loved my mother, and she loved him, but their intrigue was carried on so secretly that no one guessed it. The poor, neglected, unhappy woman must have clung to him desperately, and in her intimacy with him must have imbibed all his ways of thinking, theories of free thought, audacious ideas of independent love. But as she was so timid that she never ventured to speak aloud, it was all driven back, condensed, and compressed in her heart, which never opened itself.

"My two brothers were very cruel to her, like their father, and never gave her a caress. Used to seeing her count for nothing in the house, they treated her rather like a servant, and so I was the only one of her sons who really loved her, and whom she loved.

"I was eighteen at the time she died. I must add, in order that you may understand what follows, that a trustee had been appointed to look after my father's affairs, that a decision in favour of my mother had been pronounced, dividing the property they held in common. Thanks to the workings of the law and the intelligent devotion of a lawyer to her interests, she had preserved the right to make her will in favour of any one she pleased.

"We were told that there was a will lying at the lawyer's, and were invited to be present at the reading of it. I can remember it, as if it were yesterday. It was a grand, dramatic, yet burlesque and sur-

prising scene, brought about by the posthumous revolt of the dead woman, by a cry for liberty from the depths of her tomb, on the part of a martyred woman who had been crushed by our customs during her life, and who, from her grave, uttered a despairing appeal for independence.

"The man who thought that he was my father, a stout, ruddy-faced man who looked like a butcher, and my brothers, two great fellows of twenty and twenty-two, were waiting quietly in their chairs. Monsieur de Bourneval, who had been invited to be present, came in and stood behind me. He was very pale, and bit his mustache, which was turning grey. No doubt he was prepared for what was going to happen. The lawyer double-locked the door, and began to read the will, after opening in our presence the envelope, which was sealed with red wax, and whose contents he did not know."

My friend stopped suddenly and got up, and from his writing-table took an old paper, unfolded it, kissed it and continued:

"This is the will of my beloved mother:

"I, the undersigned, Anne-Catherine-Geneviève-Mathilde de Croixluce, the legitimate wife of Léopold-Joseph Gontran de Courcils, sound in body and mind, here express my last wishes:

"I first of all ask God, and then my dear son René, to pardon me for the act I am about to commit. I believe that my child's heart is great enough to understand me, and to forgive me. I have suffered my whole life long. I was married for mercenary reasons, then despised, misunderstood, oppressed, and constantly deceived by my husband.

"I forgive him, but I owe him nothing.

"My eldest sons never loved me, never petted me, scarcely treated me as a mother. During my whole life I was everything that I ought to have been to them, and I owe them nothing more after my death. The ties of blood cannot exist without daily and constant affection. An ungrateful son is less than a stranger; he is a culprit, for he has no right to be indifferent toward his mother.

"I have always trembled before men, before their unjust laws, their inhuman customs, their shameful prejudices. Before God, I have no longer any fear. Dead, I fling aside disgraceful hypocrisy; I dare to speak my thoughts, and to avow and to sign the secret of my heart.

"I therefore leave that part of my fortune of which the law allows me to dispose, as a deposit with my dear lover Pierre-Gennes-Simon de Bourneval, to revert afterward to our dear son René.

"(This wish is, moreover,for mulated more precisely in a notarial deed.)

"And I declare before the Supreme Judge who hears me, that I should have cursed Heaven and my own existence, if I had not met my lover's deep, devoted, tender, unshaken affection, if I had not felt in his arms that the Creator made His creatures to love, sustain, and console each other, and to weep together in the hours of sadness.

"Monsieur de Courcils is the father of my two eldest sons; René alone owes his life to Monsieur de Bourneval. I pray to the Master of men and of their destinies to place father and son above social prejudices, to make them love each other until they die, and to love me also in my coffin.

"These are my last thoughts, and my last wish.

"MATHILDE DE CROIXLUCE.

"Monsieur de Courcils had risen, and he cried:

"'It is the will of a mad woman.'

"Then Monsieur de Bourneval stepped forward

and said in a loud penetrating voice: 'I, Simon de Bourneval, solemnly declare that this writing contains nothing but the strict truth, and I am ready to prove it by letters which I possess.'

"On hearing that, Monsieur de Courcils went up to him, and I thought that they were going to collar each other. There they stood, both of them tall, one stout and the other thin, both trembling. My mother's husband stammered out:

"'You are a worthless wretch!'

"And the other replied in a loud, dry voice:

"'We will meet elsewhere, Monsieur. I should have slapped your ugly face, and challenged you long since, if I had not, before all else, thought of the peace of mind, during her lifetime, of that poor woman whom you made to suffer so much.'

"Then, turning to me, he said:

"'You are my son; will you come with me? I have no right to take you away, but I shall assume it, if you will allow me.' I shook his hand without replying, and we went out together; I was certainly three parts mad.

"Two days later Monsieur de Bourneval killed Monsieur de Courcils in a duel. My brothers, fearing the terrible scandal, held their tongues. I offered them, and they accepted, half the fortune which my mother had left me. I took my real father's name, renouncing that which the law gave me, but which was not really mine. Monsieur de Bourneval has been dead for five years, and I am still mourning for him."

He rose from his chair, took a few steps, and, standing in front of me, said:

"I hold that my mother's will was one of the most beautiful and loyal, one of the greatest acts that a woman could accomplish. Do you not agree with me?"

I held out my two hands:

"Most certainly I do, my friend."

AT SEA

THE following lines recently appeared in the press:

"Boulogne-Sur-Mer, January 22.
"From our correspondent.

"A frightful disaster has occurred which throws into consternation our maritime population, so grievously afflicted for the last two years. The fishing boat, commanded by Captain Javel, entering into port, was carried to the west, and broken upon the rocks of the breakwater near the pier. In spite of the efforts of the life-boat, and of life-lines shot out to them, four men and a cabin boy perished. The bad weather continues. Further wrecks are feared."

Who is this Captain Javel? Is he the brother of the one-armed Javel? If this poor man tossed by the waves, and dead perhaps, under the *débris* of his boat cut in pieces, is the one I think he is, he witnessed, eighteen years ago, another drama, terrible and simple as are all the formidable dramas of the sea.

Javel senior was then master of a smack. The smack is the fishing boat *par excellence*. Solid, fearing no kind of weather, with round body, rolled incessantly by the waves, like a cork, always lashed by the harsh, salty winds of the Channel, it travels the sea indefatigably, with sail filled, carrying in its wake

a net which reaches the bottom of the ocean, detaching all the sleeping creatures from the rocks, the flat fishes glued to the sand, the heavy crabs with their hooked claws, and the lobster with his pointed mustaches.

When the breeze is fresh and the waves choppy, the boat puts about to fish. A rope is fastened to the end of a great wooden shank tipped with iron, which is let down by means of two cables slipping over two spools at the extreme end of the craft. And the boat, driving under wind and current, drags after her this apparatus, which ravages and devastates the bottom of the sea.

Javel had on board his younger brother, four men, and a cabin boy. He had set out from Boulogne in fair weather to cast the nets. Then, suddenly, the wind arose and a squall drove the boat before the wind. It reached the coast of England; but a tremendous sea was beating against the cliffs and the shore so that it was impossible to enter port. The little boat put to sea again and returned to the coast of France. The storm continued to make the piers unapproachable, enveloping with foam, noise and danger every place of refuge.

The fishing boat set out again, running along the tops of the billows, tossed about, shaken up, streaming, buffeted by mountains of water, but game in spite of all, accustomed to heavy weather, which sometimes kept it wandering for five or six days between the two countries, unable to land in the one or the other.

Finally, the hurricane ceased, when they came out into open sea, and although the sea was still high,

the Old Man ordered them to cast the net. Then the great fishing tackle was thrown overboard, and two men at one side and two at the other began to unwind from windlasses the cable which held it. Suddenly it touched the bottom, but a high wave tipped the boat forward. Javel junior, who was in the prow directing the casting of the net, tottered and found his arm caught between the cable, slackened an instant by the motion, and the wood on which it was turning. He made a desperate effort with his other hand to lift the cable, but the net was dragging again and the taut cable would not yield.

Rigid with pain, he called. Every one ran to him. His brother left the helm. They threw their full force upon the rope, forcing it away from the arm it was grinding. It was in vain. "We must cut it," said a sailor, and he drew from his pocket a large knife which could, in two blows, save young Javel's arm. But to cut was to lose the net, and the net meant money, much money—fifteen hundred francs; it belonged to the elder Javel, who was keen on his property.

In anguish he cried out: "No, don't cut; I'll luff the ship." And he ran to the wheel, putting the helm about. The boat scarcely obeyed, paralyzed by the net, which counteracted its power, and driven besides by the force of the leeway and the wind.

Young Javel fell to his knees with set teeth and haggard eyes. He said nothing. His brother returned, still anxious about the sailor's knife.

"Wait! wait!" he said, "don't cut; we must cast anchor."

The anchor was thrown overboard, all the chain paid out, and they then tried to take a turn around the capstan with the cables in order to loosen them from the weight of the net. The cables finally relaxed, and they released the arm, which hung inert under a sleeve of bloody woolen cloth.

Young Javel seemed to have lost his mind. They removed his jersey, and then saw something horrible; a mass of bruised flesh, from which the blood was gushing, as if it were forced by a pump. The man himself looked at his arm and murmured: "Done for."

Then, as the hæmorrhage made a pool on the deck of the boat, the sailors cried: "He'll lose all his blood. We must bind the artery!"

They then took some twine, thick, black, tarred twine, and, twisting it around the limb above the wound, bound it with all their strength. Little by little the jets of blood stopped, and finally ceased altogether.

Young Javel arose, his arm hanging by his side. He took it by the other hand, raised it, turned it, shook it. Everything was broken; the bones were crushed completely; only the muscles held it to his body. He looked at it thoughtfully, with sad eyes. Then he seated himself on a folded sail, and his comrades came around him, advising him to soak it continually to prevent gangrene.

They put a bucket near him and every moment he would dip into it with a glass and bathe the horrible wound by letting a thin stream of clear water fall upon it.

"You would be better down below," said his

brother. He went down, but after an hour he came up again, feeling better not to be alone. And then, he preferred the open air. He sat down again upon the sail and continued bathing his arm.

The fishing was good. The huge fish with white bodies were lying beside him, shaken by the spasms of death. He looked at them without ceasing to sprinkle the mangled flesh.

When they started to return to Boulogne, another gale of wind began to blow. The little boat resumed its mad course, bounding, and tumbling, shaking the poor wounded man.

Night came on. The weather was heavy until daybreak. At sunrise, they could see England again, but as the sea was a little less rough, they turned toward France, beating against the wind.

Toward evening, young Javel called his comrades and showed them black traces and the hideous signs of decay around that part of his arm which was no longer joined to his body.

The sailors looked at it, giving advice: "That must be gangrene," said one.

"It must have salt water on it," said another.

Then they brought salt water and poured it on the wound. The wounded man became livid, grinding his teeth, and twisting with pain; but he uttered no cry.

When the burning grew less, he said to his brother: "Give me your knife." The brother gave it to him.

"Hold this arm up for me, and pull it."

His brother did as he was asked.

Then he began to cut. He cut gently, with caution, severing the last tendons with the blade as

sharp as a razor. Soon he had only a stump. He heaved a deep sigh and said: "That had to be done. Otherwise, it would be all up."

He seemed relieved and breathed energetically. He continued to pour water on the part of his arm remaining to him.

The night was still bad and they could not land. When the day appeared, young Javel took his severed arm and examined it carefully. Putrefaction had begun. His comrades came also and examined it, passing it from hand to hand, touching it, turning it over, and smelling it.

His brother said: "It's about time to throw that into the sea."

Young Javel was angry; he replied: "No, oh! no! I will not. It is mine, isn't it? Since it is my arm —" He took it and held it between his legs.

"It won't grow any less putrid," said the elder.

Then an idea came to the wounded man. In order to keep the fish when they remained a long time at sea, they had with them barrels of salt. "Couldn't I put it in there in the brine?" he asked.

"That's so," declared the others.

Then they emptied one of the barrels, already full of fish from the last few days, and, at the bottom, they deposited the arm. Then they turned salt upon it and replaced the fishes, one by one.

One of the sailors made a little joke: " Take care we don't happen to sell it at the fish market."

And everybody laughed except the Javel brothers.

The wind still blew. They beat about in sight of Boulogne until the next day at ten o'clock. The wounded man still poured water on his arm. From

time to time he would get up and walk from one end of the boat to the other. His brother, who was at the wheel, shook his head and followed him with his eye.

Finally, they came into port.

The doctor examined the wound and declared it was doing well. He dressed it properly and ordered rest. But Javel could not go to bed without having his arm again, and went quickly back to the dock to find the barrel, which he had marked with a cross.

They emptied it in front of him, and he found his arm well preserved in the salt, wrinkled and in good condition. He wrapped it in a napkin brought for this purpose, and took it home.

His wife and children examined carefully this fragment of their father, touching the fingers, taking up the grains of salt that had lodged under the nails. Then they sent for the carpenter, who measured it for a little coffin.

The next day the complete crew of the fishing smack followed the funeral of the severed arm. The two brothers, side by side, conducted the ceremony. The parish beadle held the coffin under his arm.

Javel junior gave up going to sea. He obtained a small position in port, and, later, whenever he spoke of the accident, he would say to his auditor, in a low tone: "If my brother had been willing to cut the net, I should still have my arm, for certain. But he was thinking of his valuable property."

A NORMAN

WE HAD just left Rouen, and were going along the road to Jumièges at a brisk trot. The light carriage spun along between the fields, then the horse slowed down to climb the hill of Canteleu.

At that point there is one of the most magnificent views in the world. Behind us Rouen, the town of churches, of Gothic belfries, carved like ornaments of ivory; in front, Saint-Sever, the suburb of factories, which raises its thousand smoking chimneys to the great sky, opposite the thousand sacred spires of the old city.

Here is the steeple of the cathedral, the highest of the human monuments; and down there the "Fire Pump" of "La Foudre," its rival, almost as tall, which overtops by a metre the highest pyramid of Egypt.

Before us the undulating Seine winds along, sown with islands, bordered on the right by white cliffs, crowned by a forest, and on the left by immense level fields, with another forest on their edge, far away in the distance.

From place to place, great ships were anchored along the banks of the wide river. Three enormous steamers were going out, one after another, toward Havre; and a string of boats consisting of a three-

master, two schooners, and a brig, were coming up to Rouen, towed by a little tug, which vomited a cloud of black smoke.

My companion, born in the country, did not see this surprising landscape from the same point of view as I. But he smiled continually; he seemed to be laughing to himself. Suddenly he exclaimed: "Ah! you are about to see something funny — the chapel of Father Matthew. That is something really good, my boy."

I looked at him in astonishment. He continued:

"I am going to give you a flavour of Normandy that will remain in your nose. Father Matthew is the handsomest Norman in the province and his chapel is one of the wonders of the world, no more nor less. But I will give you first a few words of explanation. Father Matthew, or 'Father Booze' as they also call him, is an old sergeant-major, returned to his native village. He unites, in admirable proportions, the perfect humbug of the old soldier and the sly malice of the Norman. On his return to these parts, thanks to innumerable protectors and incredible trickeries, he was made the guardian of a miraculous chapel, a chapel protected by the Virgin, and frequented principally by pregnant girls. He baptized the marvelous statue there as: 'Notre Dame du Gros-Ventre,' and he treats it with a certain mocking familiarity which does not exclude respect. He has himself composed and had printed a special prayer for his Good Virgin. This prayer is a masterpiece of unintentional irony, of Norman wit, where ridicule is mixed with fear of the saint, a superstitious fear of secret influence of some kind.

He does not believe much in his patron saint; nevertheless, he believes in her a little and treats her gently as a matter of policy.

"Here is the beginning of this extraordinary prayer:

"'Our good Lady, the Virgin Mary, natural Patroness of girl-mothers, in this country and in all the earth, protect your servant who has sinned in a moment of forgetfulness.'

" The supplication terminates thus:

"'Especially, do not forget to speak for me to your sainted Husband, and intercede with God the Father that he may accord me a good husband like your own.'

"This prayer, forbidden by the clergy of the country, is sold by him privately, and is regarded as helpful by those who repeat it with unction. In fact, he speaks of the good Virgin as a valet might of his master, some redoubtable prince, knowing all his little intimate secrets. He knows a host of amusing stories about her which he whispers amongst friends after he has been drinking.

"But you must see for yourself.

"As the revenue furnished by the Patroness did not seem sufficient, he has added to his chief asset, the Virgin, a little trade in saints. He keeps them all, or nearly all. And, as room was lacking in the chapel, he stocked them in the woodshed, from which he gets them whenever the faithful ask for them. He has carved these wonderfully comical statuettes himself, out of wood, and painted them all green, a solid colour, one year when they painted his house. You know the saints heal maladies, but

each has his specialty; and one must not run into error or confusion in these things. They are jealous one of the other, like play-actors.

"So that they may not make any mistake, the poor old women come and consult Matthew.

"'For bad ears, what saint is best?' they say.

"'Well, there is Saint Osymus who is good; and there is also Saint Pamphilius, who is not bad,' he tells them.

"That is not all. When Matthew has time on his hands, he drinks. But he drinks like an artist, one that is sure of himself, so much so that he is tipsy regularly every evening. He is tipsy, but he knows it; he knows it so well that he notes each day the exact degree of his drunkenness. It is his principal occupation. The chapel comes afterward.

"And he has invented, — listen to this and prepare for a surprise, — he has invented the boozometer. The instrument does not yet exist, but Matthew's observations are as precise as those of a mathematician. You will hear him say continually:

"'Since Monday, I have not gone above forty-five.' Or, 'I was between fifty-two and fifty-eight,' or 'I had sixty-six to seventy,' or, perhaps, 'Ah! confound it, I believed I was in the fifties, when here I find I was at seventy-five!'

"He never makes a mistake. He says that he has not yet reached the hundredth degree, but, as he admits that his observations cease to be precise after he has passed ninety, one cannot absolutely rely upon this statement.

"When Matthew recognizes that he has passed ninety, you may be sure that he is really tipsy. On

these occasions, his wife, Mélie, another marvel, works herself into great anger. She waits for him at the door when he enters, and shrieks: 'Here you are, you nasty pig, you drunken good-for-nothing.'

"Then Matthew, no longer laughing, plants himself before her, and in severe tone says: 'Be still, Mélie, this is no time to talk. Wait till to-morrow.'

"If she continues to vociferate, he approaches her, and with trembling voice says: 'Shut your jaw; I am in the nineties; I can no longer measure; I am going to hurt some one; take care!'

"Then Mélie beats a retreat.

"If she tries the next day to return to the subject, he laughs in her face and answers: 'Come, come! enough of that; that is all over. So long as I have not reached the hundredth degree, there is no harm done. But if I pass that, I will allow you to correct me, I give you my word'!"

We had reached the summit of the hill. The road lay through the wonderful forest of Roumare. The autumn, the marvelous autumn, mixed her gold and purple with the last green leaves, still vivid, as if some drops of sunlight had rained down from the sky into the thickest of the wood.

We crossed Duclair; then, instead of continuing toward Jumièges, my friend turned to the left, and, taking a short cut, struck into the wood. And soon, from the summit of a green hill, we discovered anew the magnificent valley of the Seine and the tortuous river itself, winding along at our feet.

Upon the right, a little building, with a slate roof and a clock-tower as high as an umbrella, leaned

against a pretty house with green shutters, all clothed in honeysuckle and roses.

A loud voice cried out: "Here are some friends!" And Matthew appeared upon the threshold. He was a man of sixty, thin, wearing a pointed beard and long, white mustaches. My companion shook hands with him and introduced me. Matthew made us enter a cool, clean kitchen, which also served as a living-room.

"I, sir," said Matthew, "have no distinguished apartment. I like better not to get too far from the eatables. The pots and pans, you see, are company." Then, turning toward my friend, he added:

"Why have you come on Thursday? You know well that it is My Lady's consultation day. I cannot go out this afternoon."

Then, running to the door, he uttered a terrible call: "Mé-li-ee!" which must have made the sailors raise their heads in the ships going up and down the river, at the bottom of the valley.

Mélie did not answer.

Then Matthew winked maliciously: "She is not pleased with me, you see, because yesterday I was up to ninety."

My neighbour began to laugh. "Ninety, Matthew! How was that?"

Matthew answered: "I will tell you. I found last year only twenty rasières of cider apples. There were no more, but in order to make good cider these are the best. I made a barrelful and yesterday I tapped it. As for nectar, that is nectar; you will say so, too. I had Polyte here. We took a drink and then another drink without quenching our thirst, for one could

drink it till to-morrow. I drank so much, one drink after another, that I felt a coolness in my stomach. I said to Polyte: 'If we should take a glass of brandy, now, it would heat us up.' He consented. But brandy, — that put a fire in my body, so hot that it was necessary to return to the cider. So there it was! From coolness to heat and from heat to coolness, I perceived that I was in the nineties. Polyte was far beyond a hundred."

The door opened. Mélie appeared, and immediately, before she said "Good day" to us, exclaimed: "Pigs! You were far beyond the hundred mark, both of you!"

Matthew was angry, but answered: "Say not so, Mélie, say not so; I have never been beyond a hundred."

They gave us an exquisite breakfast, before the door under two lime-trees, at the side of the little chapel of "Notre Dame du Gros-Ventre," with the beautiful landscape before us. And Matthew related to us, with raillery mingled with credulity, some unlikely stories of miracles.

We had drunk much of the adorable cider, pungent and sweet, cool and powerful, which he preferred to all liquids, and were smoking our pipes, sitting astride our chairs, when two good women presented themselves.

They were old, dried, and bent. After bowing, they asked for Saint Blanc. Matthew winked his eye toward us, and said:

"I will go and get him for you." And he disappeared into his woodshed.

He remained there five minutes, then returned

with face filled with consternation. Raising his arms, he declared:

"I don't know at all where he is. I cannot find him. I am sure that I had him!" Then, making a horn of his hands, he called: "Mélie!"

From the foot of the garden his wife answered: "What is it?"

"Where is Saint Blanc? I can't find him in the shed!"

Then Mélie threw back this explanation:

"Wasn't it him you took to stop the hole in the rabbit hutch last week?"

Matthew started. "Good God. Maybe that's so."

Then he said to the two women: "Follow me."

They followed. We almost suffocated with laughter. In fact, Saint Blanc, stuck in the earth like a common stake, stained with mud and filth, was being used to make one corner of the rabbit hutch.

When they perceived him, the two good women fell on their knees, crossed themselves, and began to murmur their *oremus*. Matthew hurried to them. "Wait," said he, "you are kneeling in the dirt; I will bring you some straw."

And he went to find some straw and made them a prayer cushion. Then, seeing that his saint was muddy, and believing, without doubt, that it would be bad for the trade, he added: "I am going to clean him up a bit."

He took a pail of water and a brush and began to wash the wooden figure vigorously. Meantime the two old women continued to pray.

When he had finished, he said: "Now it is all

right." And then he brought us back for another drink.

As he raised the glass to his lips, he stopped and said, with an air of embarrassment: "Well, indeed, when I put Saint Blanc in the rabbit hutch, I was sure he would never earn me another penny. For two years there had been no demand for him. But the saints, you see, never die."

He drank and continued:

"Come, let us have another. Amongst friends you must never go less than fifty, and we're only at thirty-eight."

IN THE COUNTRY

THE two cottages stood side by side at the foot of a hill near a little seaside resort. The two peasants laboured hard on the fertile soil to rear their little ones, of whom each family had four.

Before the adjoining doors a whole troop of brats swarmed from morning till night. The two eldest were six years old, and the youngest were about fifteen months; the marriages, and afterwards the births, having taken place nearly simultaneously in both families.

The two mothers could hardly distinguish their own offspring among the lot, and as for the fathers, they mixed them up completely. The eight names danced in their heads; they were always getting them mixed up; and when they wished to call one child, the men often called three names before getting the right one.

The first of the two cottages, as you came up from the watering-place, Rolleport, was occupied by the Tuvaches, who had three girls and one boy; the other house sheltered the Vallins, who had one girl and three boys.

They all subsisted frugally on soup, potatoes and fresh air. At seven o'clock in the morning, then at noon, then at six o'clock in the evening, the housewives got their broods together to give them their

food, as the gooseherds collect their flocks. The children were seated, according to age, before the wooden table, polished by fifty years of use; the mouths of the youngest hardly reaching the level of the table. Before them was placed a bowl filled with bread, soaked in the water in which the potatoes had been boiled, half a cabbage and three onions; and the whole line ate until their hunger was appeased. The mother herself fed the smallest.

A little meat in the pot on Sundays was a feast for all; and the father on this day sat longer over the meal, repeating: "I wish we could have this every day."

One afternoon, in the month of August, a phaeton unexpectedly stopped in front of the cottages, and a young woman, who was driving the horses, said to the gentleman sitting at her side:

"Oh, look at all those children, Henri! How pretty they are, tumbling about in the dust, like that!"

The man did not answer, accustomed to these outbursts of admiration, which were a pain and almost a reproach to him. The young woman continued:

"I must hug them! Oh, how I should like to have one of them — that one there — the little tiny one!"

Springing down from the carriage, she ran toward the children, took one of the two youngest — a Tuvache child — and lifting him up in her arms, she kissed him passionately on his dirty cheeks, on his tousled hair daubed with earth, and on his little hands, with which he fought vigorously to get away from the caresses, which displeased him.

Then she got into the carriage again, and drove

off at a lively trot. But she returned the following week, and seating herself on the ground, took the youngster in her arms, stuffed him with cakes, gave sweets to all the others, and played with them like a young girl, while the husband waited patiently in the carriage.

She returned again; made the acquaintance of the parents, and reappeared every day with her pockets full of dainties and pennies.

Her name was Madame Henri d'Hubières.

One morning, on arriving, her husband alighted with her, and without stopping to talk to the children, who now knew her well, she entered the farmer's cottage.

They were busy chopping wood for the fire. They rose to their feet in surprise, brought forward chairs, and waited expectantly.

Then the woman, in a broken, trembling voice, began:

"My good people, I have come to see you, because I should like — I should like to take — your little boy with me —"

The country people, too bewildered to think, did not answer.

She recovered her breath, and continued: "We are alone, my husband and I. We would keep it. Are you willing?"

The peasant woman began to understand. She asked:

"You want to take Charlot from us? Oh, no, indeed!"

Then M. d'Hubières intervened:

"My wife has not made her meaning clear. We

wish to adopt him, but he will come back to see you. If he turns out well, as there is every reason to expect, he will be our heir. If we, by any chance, should have children, he will share equally with them; but if he should not reward our care, we should give him, when he comes of age, a sum of twenty thousand francs, which will be deposited immediately in his name, with a lawyer. As we have thought also of you, we will pay you, until your death, a pension of one hundred francs a month. Do you understand me?"

The woman had risen to her feet, furious.

"You want me to sell you Charlot? Oh, no, that's not the sort of thing to ask of a mother! Oh, no! That would be an abomination!"

The man, grave and deliberate, said nothing; but approved of what his wife said by a continued nodding of his head.

Madame d'Hubières, in dismay, began to weep; turning to her husband, with a voice full of tears, the voice of a child used to having all its wishes gratified, she stammered:

"They will not do it, Henri, they will not do it."

Then he made a last attempt: "But, my friends, think of the child's future, of his happiness, of —"

The peasant woman, however, exasperated, cut him short:

"We know all about that! We've heard all that before! Get out of here, and don't let me see you again — the idea of wanting to take away a child like that!"

Madame d'Hubières remembered that there were two quite young children, and she asked, through her

tears, with the tenacity of a wilful and spoiled woman:

"But is the other little one not yours?"

Father Tuvache answered: "No, it is our neighbours'. You can go to them if you wish." And he went back into his house, whence could be heard the indignant voice of his wife.

The Vallins were at table, slowly eating slices of bread which they parsimoniously spread with a little rancid butter on a plate between the two.

M. d'Hubières recommenced his proposals, but with more insinuations, more oratorical precautions, more shrewdness.

The two country people shook their heads, in sign of refusal, but when they learned that they were to have a hundred francs a month, they considered the matter, consulting one another by glances, much disturbed. They kept silent for a long time, tortured, hesitating. At last the woman asked: "What do you say to it, father?" In a weighty tone he said: "I say that it's not to be despised."

Madame d'Hubières, trembling with anguish, spoke of the future of their child, of his happiness, and of the money which he could give them later.

The peasant asked: "This pension of twelve hundred francs, will it be promised before a lawyer?"

M. d'Hubières responded: "Why, certainly, beginning with to-morrow."

The woman, who was thinking it over, continued: "A hundred francs a month is not enough to pay for depriving us of the child. That child would be working in a few years; we must have a hundred and twenty francs."

Tapping her foot with impatience, Madame d'Hubières granted it at once, and, as she wished to carry off the child with her, she gave a hundred francs extra, as a present, while her husband drew up a paper. And the young woman, radiant, carried off the howling brat, as one carries away a wished-for knick-knack from a shop.

The Tuvaches, from their door, watched her departure, silent, serious, perhaps regretting their refusal.

Nothing more was heard of little Jean Vallin. The parents went to the lawyer every month to collect their hundred and twenty francs. They had quarrelled with their neighbours, because Mother Tuvache grossly insulted them, continually, repeating from door to door that one must be unnatural to sell one's child; that it was horrible, disgusting bribery. Sometimes she would take her Charlot in her arms, ostentatiously exclaiming, as if he understood:

"I didn't sell *you*, I didn't! I didn't sell *you*, my little one! I'm not rich, but I don't sell my children!"

And this went on for years and years. Every day coarse jeers were shouted outside the door so that they could be heard in the neighbouring house. Mother Tuvache finally believed herself superior to the whole countryside because she had not sold Charlot. Those who spoke of her used to say:

"I know, of course, that it was a tempting offer; yet, she behaved like a real mother."

She was cited as a model and Charlot, who was nearly eighteen, brought up with this idea, which was

constantly repeated, thought himself superior to his comrades because he had not been sold.

The Vallins lived comfortably, thanks to the pension. That was the cause of the unappeasable fury of the Tuvaches, who had remained miserably poor. Their eldest went away to serve his time in the army; Charlot alone remained to labour with his old father, to support the mother and two younger sisters.

He had reached twenty-one years when, one morning, a brilliant carriage stopped before the two cottages. A young gentleman, with a gold watch-chain, got out, giving his hand to an aged, white-haired lady. The old lady said to him: "It is there, my child, at the second house." And he entered the house of the Vallins as if he were at home.

The old mother was washing her aprons; the infirm father was asleep in the chimney-corner. Both raised their heads, and the young man said:

"Good-morning, papa; good-morning, mamma!"

They both stood up, frightened! In a flutter, the peasant woman dropped her soap into the water, and stammered:

"Is it you, my child? Is it you, my child?"

He took her in his arms and hugged her, repeating: "Good-morning, mamma," while the old man, all trembling, said, in the calm tone which he never lost: "Here you are, back again, Jean," as if he had just seen him a month ago.

When they had recognized each other again, the parents wished to take their boy out in the neighbourhood, and show him. They took him to the

mayor, to the deputy, to the priest, and to the schoolmaster.

Charlot, standing on the threshold of his cottage, watched him pass.

In the evening, at supper, he said to the old people: "You must have been stupid to let the Vallins' boy be taken."

The mother answered, obstinately: "I wouldn't sell *my* child."

The father remained silent. The son continued: "It is unfortunate to be sacrificed like that."

Then Father Tuvache, in an angry tone, said: "Are you going to reproach us for having kept you?" And the young man said, brutally:

"Yes, I reproach you for having been such fools. Parents like you cause the misfortune of children. You deserve that I should leave you."

The old woman wept over her plate. She moaned, as she swallowed the spoonfuls of soup, half of which she spilled: "One may kill oneself to bring up children!"

Then the boy said, roughly: "I'd rather not have been born than be what I am. When I saw the other fellow, my heart stood still. I said to myself: 'See what I should have been now!'" He got up: "See here, I feel that I would do better not to stay here, because I would throw it in your faces from morning till night, and I would make your life miserable. I'll never forgive you for that!"

The two old people were silent, downcast, in tears.

He continued: "No, the thought of that would be too much. I'd rather look for a living somewhere else."

He opened the door. The sound of voices entered. The Vallins were celebrating the return of their child.

Then Charlot stamped with rage, and, turning to his parents, he shouted:

"You silly yokels!"

And he disappeared into the night.

A COCK CROWED

MADAME Berthe d'Avancelles up to that time had resisted all the prayers of her despairing admirer, Baron Joseph de Croissard. In Paris during the winter he had pursued her ardently, and now he was giving fêtes and shooting parties in her honour at his château at Carville, in Normandy.

Monsieur d'Avancelles, her husband, saw nothing and knew nothing, as usual. It was said that he lived apart from his wife on account of physical weakness, for which Madame d'Avancelles would not pardon him. He was a stout, bald little man, with short arms, legs, neck, nose and everything else, while Madame d'Avancelles, on the contrary, was a tall, dark and determined young woman, who laughed loudly in her husband's face, while he called her openly "Mrs. Housewife," and who looked at the broad shoulders, strong build and fair moustaches of her recognized admirer, Baron Joseph de Croissard, with a certain amount of tenderness.

She had not, however, granted him anything as yet. The Baron was ruining himself for her, and there was a constant round of fêtes, hunting parties and new pleasures, to which he invited the neighbouring nobility. All day long the hounds bayed in the woods, as they followed the fox or the wild

boar, and every night dazzling fireworks mingled their burning plumes with the stars, while the illuminated windows of the drawing-room cast long rays of light on the wide lawns, where shadows were moving to and fro.

It was autumn, the russet-coloured season, and the leaves were whirling about on the grass like flights of birds. One noticed the smell of damp earth in the air, of the naked earth, as one smells the odour of naked flesh, when a woman's dress falls from her, after a ball.

One evening in the previous spring, during an entertainment, Madame d'Avancelles had said to Monsieur de Croissard, who was worrying her by his importunities: "If I do succumb to you, my friend, it will not be before the fall of the leaf. I have too many things to do this summer to have any time for it." He had not forgotten that bold and amusing speech, and every day he became more pressing, every day he advanced in his approaches, and gained a step in the heart of the fair, audacious woman, who seemed only to be resisting for form's sake.

It was the eve of a great wild-boar hunt, and Madame Berthe said to the Baron with a laugh: "Baron, if you kill the brute, I shall have something for you." And so, at dawn he was up and out, to try to discover where the wild animal had its lair. He accompanied his beaters, settled the places for the relays, and organized everything personally to insure his triumph, and when the horns gave the signal for setting out, he appeared in a closely-fitting coat of scarlet and gold, with his waist drawn in tight, his chest expanded, his eyes radiant, and as fresh

and strong as if he had just got out of bed. They set out, and the wild boar started off through the underwood as soon as he was dislodged, followed by the hounds in full cry, while the horses set off at a gallop through the narrow paths of the forest, and the carriages, which followed the chase at a distance, drove noiselessly along the soft roads.

Out of mischief, Madame d'Avancelles kept the Baron by her side, lagging behind at a walk in an interminably long and straight alley, over which four rows of oaks hung, so as to form almost an arch, while he, trembling with love and anxiety, listened with one ear to the young woman's bantering chatter, while with the other he listened to the blast of the horns and to the cry of the hounds as they receded in the distance.

"So you do not love me any longer?" she observed. "How can you say such things?" he replied. And she continued: "But you seem to be paying more attention to the sport than to me." He groaned, and said: "Did you not order me to kill the animal myself?" And she replied gravely: "Of course I am counting on that. You must kill it before my eyes."

Then he trembled in his saddle, spurred his horse until it reared, and, losing all patience, exclaimed: "But, by Jove, Madame, that is impossible if we remain here." And she retorted laughingly: "But it must be done or . . . so much the worse for you." Then she spoke tenderly to him, laying her hand on his arm, or stroking his horse's mane, as if by mistake.

Just then they turned to the right, into a narrow path which was overhung by trees, and suddenly, to

avoid a branch which barred their way, she leaned towards him so closely, that he felt her hair tickling his neck, and he suddenly threw his arms brutally round her and, pressing her forehead with his thick moustache, he gave her a furious kiss.

At first she did not move, and remained motionless under that mad caress; then she turned her head with a jerk, and either by accident or design her little lips met his, under their tuft of fair hair, and a moment afterwards, either from confusion or remorse, she struck her horse with her riding-whip, and went off at full gallop, and they rode on like that for a time, without even exchanging a look.

The noise of the hunt came nearer, the thickets seemed to tremble, and suddenly the wild boar broke through the bushes, covered with blood, and trying to shake off the hounds which had fastened upon him, and the Baron, uttering a shout of triumph, exclaimed: "Let him who loves me follow me!" And he disappeared in the copse, as if the wood had swallowed him up.

When she reached an open glade a few minutes later, he was just getting up, covered with mud, his coat torn, and his hands bloody, while the brute was lying stretched out at full length, with the Baron's hunting knife driven into its shoulder up to the hilt.

The quarry was cut by torchlight on a night that was wild and melancholy. The moon threw a yellow light on the torches, which made the night misty with their resinous smoke. The hounds devoured the wild boar's stinking entrails, and snarled and fought for them, while the beaters and the gentlemen, standing in a circle round the spoil, blew their horns

as loud as they could. The flourish of the hunting-horns resounded beyond the woods on that still night and was repeated by the echoes of the distant valleys, awaking the timid stags, rousing the yelping foxes, and disturbing the little grey rabbits in their gambols at the edge of the glades.

The frightened night-birds flew over the eager pack of hounds, while the women, who were moved by all these gentle and violent things, leaned rather heavily on the men's arms; and turned aside into the pathways, before the hounds had finished their meal. Madame d'Avancelles, feeling languid after that day of fatigue and tenderness, said to the Baron: "Will you take a turn in the park, my friend?" And without replying, but trembling and nervous, he put his arm around her, and immediately they kissed each other. They walked slowly under the almost leafless trees through which the moonbeams filtered, and their love, their desires, their longing for a closer embrace became so vehement, that they almost sank down at the foot of a tree.

The horns were silent, and the tired hounds were sleeping in the kennels. "Let us return," the young woman said, and they went back.

When they got to the château and before they went in, she said in a weak voice: "I am so tired that I shall go to bed, my friend." And as he opened his arms for a last kiss, she ran away, saying as a last good-bye: "No. . . . I am going to sleep. . . . Let him who loves me follow me!"

An hour later, when the whole silent château seemed dead, the Baron crept stealthily out of his room, and went and scratched at her door, and as

she did not reply, he tried to open it, and found that it was not locked.

She was dreaming as she leaned upon the window-ledge, and he threw himself at her knees, which he kissed madly, through her nightdress. She said nothing, but buried her delicate fingers caressingly in his hair, and suddenly, as if she had formed some great resolution, she whispered with a bold glance: "I shall come back, wait for me." And stretching out her hand, she pointed with her finger to an indistinct white spot at the end of the room; it was her bed.

Then, in the dark with trembling hands and scarcely knowing what he was doing, he quickly undressed, got into the cool sheets, and stretching himself out comfortably, he almost forgot his love in the pleasure of feeling the linen caress his tired body. She did not return, however, no doubt finding amusement in straining his patience. He closed his eyes with a feeling of exquisite comfort, and reflected peaceably while waiting for what he so ardently desired. But by degrees his limbs grew languid and his thoughts became indistinct and fleeting, until his great fatigue overcame him and he fell asleep.

He slept that unconquerable, heavy sleep of the worn-out hunter, and he slept until daylight; and then, as the window had remained half open, the crowing of a cock suddenly woke him, and the Baron opened his eyes, and feeling a woman's body against his, finding himself, much to his surprise, in a strange bed, and remembering nothing for a moment, he stammered:

"What? Where am I? What is the matter?"

Then she, who had not been asleep at all, looking at this unkempt man, with red eyes and thick lips, replied in the haughty tone of voice in which she spoke to her husband:

"It is nothing; it is only a cock crowing. Go to sleep again, Monsieur, it has nothing to do with you."

A SON

THE two old friends were walking in the garden all in bloom, where life was stirred by the gay springtime.

One was a senator and the other a member of the French Academy, grave, both of them, full of reason and logic, but solemn, — people of note and reputation.

At first they chattered about politics, exchanging thoughts, not upon ideas but men: personalities, which in such matters, always take precedence over reasoned argument. Then they awoke old memories; then they were silent, continuing to walk side by side, both relaxed by the sweetness of the air.

A great cluster of wallflowers sent forth their sweet and delicate perfume. A heap of flowers, of every kind and colour, threw their sweetness into the air, while a laburnum tree, covered with yellow flowers, scattered to the wind its fine powder, a golden smoke which reminded one of honey, and which carried, like the caressing powder of the perfumer, its embalmed seed across space.

The senator stopped, inhaled the fertile cloud that was floating by him, looked at the blossoming tree, resplendent as a sun, from which the pollen was now escaping. And he said:

"When one thinks that these imperceptible atoms,

which smell so nice, can bring in to existence in a hundred places, miles from here, plants of their own kind, can start the sap and fibre of the female trees, and produce creatures with roots, which are born from a germ, as we are, mortal as we are, and which will be replaced by other beings of the same essence, just like us!"

Then, standing in front of the radiant laburnum tree, whose vivifying perfume permeated every breath of air, the senator added:

"Ah! my fine fellow, if you were to count your children you would be woefully embarrassed. Here is one who brings them easily into the world, abandons them without remorse and worries little about them afterward."

The Academician replied: "We do the same, my friend."

The senator answered: "Yes, I do not deny that; we do abandon them sometimes, but we know it, at least, and that constitutes our superiority."

The other man shook his head: "No, that is not what I mean; you see, my dear fellow, there is scarcely a man who does not possess some unknown children, those children labeled *father unknown*, whom he has created, as this tree reproduces itself, almost unconsciously.

"If we had to establish the count of the women we have had, we should be, should we not, as embarrassed as this laburnum tree which you are addressing, if it were called upon to enumerate its descendants?

"From eighteen to forty, counting all our passing encounters and contacts of an hour, it may easily

be granted that we have had intimate relations with two or three hundred women. Ah, well! my friend, among this number are you sure that you have not made fruitful at least one, and that you have not, upon the streets or in prison, some blackguard son, who robs and assassinates honest people, that is to say, people like us? or perhaps a daughter, in some house of ill-fame? or perhaps, if she chanced to be abandoned by her mother, a cook in somebody's kitchen?

"Remember further that nearly all women that we call 'public' possess one or two children whose father they do not know, children caught in the hazard of their embraces at ten or twenty francs. In every trade, there is profit and loss. This offspring constitutes the 'loss' of their profession. Who were their progenitors? You — I — all of us, respectable men! These are the results of our gay dinner parties, of our amusing evenings, of the hours when our well-fed bodies drive us to chance love encounters.

"Robbers, tramps, all such wretches, in short, are our children. And how much better that is for us than if we were theirs, for they reproduce also, these ruffians!

"Listen: I, for my part, have an ugly story on my conscience, which I would like to tell you. It brings me incessant remorse, and more than that, continual doubt and an unappeasable uncertainty which at times tortures me horribly.

"At the age of twenty-five I had undertaken, with one of my friends, now a conseiller d'Etat, a journey through Brittany, on foot.

"After fifteen or twenty days of rapid walking, after having visited the Côtes-du-Nord, and a part of Finisterre, we arrived at Douarnenez; from there, in a day's march, we reached the wild Pointe du Raz, via the Baie des Trépassés, where we slept in some village whose name ends in *of*. When the morning came a strange fatigue held my comrade in bed. I say 'bed' from habit, since our bed was composed simply of two bundles of straw.

"It was impossible to be sick in such a place. I forced him to get up, and we reached Audierne about four or five o'clock in the evening. The next day he was a little better. We set out again, but on the way he was taken with intolerable pains and it was with great difficulty that we were able to reach Pont-Labbé.

"There at least there was an inn. My friend went to bed, and the doctor, whom we called from Quimper, found a high fever, without quite determining the nature of it.

"Do you know Pont-Labbé? No. Well, it is the most characteristic Breton town from Pointe du Raz to Morbihan — a region which contains the essence of Breton morals, and legends, and customs. To-day, even, this corner of the country has scarcely changed at all. I say 'to-day, even,' because I return there now every year, alas!

"An old castle bathes the foot of its towers in a sad, dismal pond, peopled by flights of wild birds. Out of it flows a river, deep enough for coasting vessels to come up to the town. In the narrow streets, with the old houses, the men wear wide hats and embroidered waistcoats and four coats, one

above the other; the first, about the size of the hand, covers only the shoulder-blades, while the last stops just above the seat of the breeches.

"The girls, who are tall, beautiful, and fresh looking, wear a bodice of thick cloth which forms a breast-plate and corset, constraining and leaving scarcely a suspicion of their swelling, martyrized busts. Their head-dresses are also strange: over the temples two embroidered bands in colour frame the face, binding the hair, which falls loose behind the head and is then carried up to the crown of the head under a curious bonnet often woven of gold or silver.

"The servant at our inn was eighteen years old at the most, with blue eyes, a pale blue, which were pierced with the two little black dots of the pupils; and with short closely set teeth, which she constantly showed in laughing and which seemed made for biting granite.

"She did not know a word of French, speaking only the Breton patois, as do most of her compatriots.

"Well, my friend was no better, and, although no disease was diagnosed, the doctor forbade his setting out, ordering complete rest. I spent the days with him, the little maid coming in frequently, bringing perhaps my dinner or some drink for him.

"I teased her a little, which seemed to amuse her, but we did not talk, naturally, since we could not understand each other.

"Well, one night, having remained with the sick man very late, when going to my room, I met the girl going to hers. It was just opposite my open

door. Then suddenly, without reflecting upon what I was doing, and more by way of a joke than anything, I seized her around the waist, and before she was over her astonishment I had thrown her and shut her in my room. She looked at me, startled, frightened, terrified, not daring to cry out for fear of scandal, and of being driven out by her master at first and her father afterwards.

"I had done this as a joke; but when I saw her there, I was filled by the desire to possess her. There was a long and silent struggle, a struggle of body against body after the fashion of athletes, with arms tense, contracted, twisted; rapid breathing, skin moist with perspiration. Oh! she fought valiantly; and sometimes we would hit a piece of furniture, a partition, or a chair; then, still clutching each other, we would remain motionless for some seconds in fear lest the noise had awakened some one; then we would commence again our desperate battle, I attacking, she resisting. Exhausted, finally, she fell; and I took her brutally, upon the ground, upon the floor.

"As soon as she was released, she ran to the door, drew the bolts, and fled. I scarcely met her during the following days. She would not allow me to go near her. Then, when my comrade was better and we were to continue our journey, on the eve of our departure, she came barefooted, in her chemise, to the room where I had just retired.

"She threw herself into my arms, drew me to her passionately, and, until daylight, embraced me, caressed me, weeping and sobbing, giving me all the assurances of tenderness and despair that a woman

can give when she does not know a word of our language.

"A week later I had forgotten this adventure, so common and frequent when one is travelling, the servants of the inns being generally destined to entertain travellers in this manner.

"Thirty years passed without my thinking of, or returning to, Pont-Labbé. Then, in 1876, I happened to go there, in the course of an excursion into Brittany which I had undertaken to get material for a book and to make myself familiar with the landscape.

"Nothing seemed to have changed. The castle still soaked its grey walls in the pond at the entrance of the little town; the inn was there, too, although repaired, remodelled, with a modern air. On entering I was received by two young Breton girls of about eighteen, fresh and pretty, enlaced in their narrow cloth bodices, with their silver head-dress and large embroidered ear caps.

"It was about six o'clock in the evening. I sat down to dine and as the host was serving me himself, fate, without doubt, led me to ask him: 'Did you know the former master of this house? I spent a fortnight here once, thirty years ago. I am speaking of very far-off times.'

"He answered: 'Those were my parents, sir.'

"Then I told him the occasion of my stopping there, recalling my being detained by the illness of my comrade. He did not allow me to finish:

"'Oh! I remember that perfectly,' said he; 'I was fifteen or sixteen then. You slept in the room at the

end of the hall and your friend in the one that is now mine, looking on to the street.'

"Then for the first time, a vivid recollection of the pretty maid came back to me. I asked: 'Do you recall a nice little servant that your father had, who had, if I remember, pretty blue eyes and fine teeth?'

"He replied: 'Yes, sir; she died in childbirth some time after.'

"And pointing toward the courtyard where a thin lame man was turning over some manure, he added: 'That is her son.'

"I began to laugh. 'He is not beautiful, and does not resemble his mother at all. Takes after his father, no doubt.'

"The innkeeper replied: 'It may be; but they never knew who his father was. She died without telling, and no one here knew she had a lover. It was a tremendous surprise when we found it out. No one would believe it.'

"A kind of disagreeable shiver went over me, one of those painful suggestions that touch the heart, like the approach of a heavy sorrow. I looked at the man in the yard. He came now to draw some water for the horses and carried two pails, limping, making grievous efforts with the leg that was shorter. He was ragged and hideously dirty, with long yellow hair, so matted that it hung in strings down his cheeks.

"The innkeeper added: 'He is not up to much, and has only been kept here out of charity. Perhaps he would have turned out better if he had been brought up properly. But, you see how it is, sir?

No father, no mother, no money! My parents took pity on him as a child, but after all — he was not theirs, you see.'

"I said nothing.

"I went to bed in my old room, and all night I could think of nothing but that frightful stable boy, repeating to myself: 'What if that were my son! Could I have killed that girl and brought that creature into existence?

"It was possible, of course. I resolved to speak to this man and to find out exactly the date of his birth. A difference of two months would set my doubts at rest.

"I had him come to me the next day. But he could not speak French either. He seemed not to understand anything. Besides, he was absolutely ignorant of his age, which one of the maids asked him for me. And he stood in front of me like an idiot, rolling his cap in his knotty and disgusting paws, laughing stupidly, with something of the old laugh of the mother in the corners of his mouth and eyes.

"But the host came along, and went to look up the birth certificate of the poor wretch. He entered this life eight months and twenty-six days after my departure from Pont-Labbé, because I recalled perfectly arriving at Lorient on the fifteenth of August. The record said: 'Father unknown.' The mother was called Jeanne Karradec.

"Then my heart began to beat rapidly. I could not speak, I felt so choked with emotion. And I looked at that brute, whose long yellow hair seemed a more sordid dung heap than that of beasts. And

the wretch, embarrassed by my look, ceased to laugh, turned his head, and tried to get away.

"Every day I would wander along the little river, sadly reflecting. But what was the use? Nothing could give me any certainty. For hours and hours I would weigh all the reasons, good and bad, for and against the chances of my paternity, worrying myself with intricate suppositions, only to return again to the horrible suspicion, then to the conviction, more atrocious still, that this man was my son.

"I could not dine and I retired to my room. It was a long time before I could sleep. Then sleep came, a sleep haunted with insupportable visions. I could see this ninny laughing in my face and calling me 'Papa.' Then he would change into a dog and bite me in the calf of my leg. In vain I tried to free myself, he would follow me always, and, instead of barking he would speak, abusing me. Then he would appear before my colleagues at the Academy, called together for the purpose of deciding whether I was his father. And one of them cried: 'It is indubitable! See how he resembles him!'

"And in fact, I perceived that the monster did resemble me. And I awoke with this idea fixed in my mind, and with a mad desire to see the man again and decide whether he did or did not have features in common with my own.

"I joined him as he was going to mass (it was on Sunday) and gave him a franc, scanning his face anxiously. He began to laugh in an ignoble fashion, took the money, then, again constrained by my eye, he fled, after having blurted out a word,

almost inarticulate, which meant to say 'Thank you,' without doubt.

"That day passed for me in the same agony as the preceding. Toward evening I sent for the proprietor and, with great caution, precautions, and finesse, I told him that I had become interested in this poor being so abandoned by everybody and so deprived of everything, and that I wished to do something for him.

"The man replied: 'Oh, don't worry about him, sir. He wants nothing; you will only make trouble for yourself. I employ him to clean the stable, and it is all that he can do. For that, I feed him and he sleeps with the horses. He needs nothing more. If you have an old pair of trousers, give them to him, but they will be in pieces in a week.'

"I did not insist, but waited to see.

"The fellow returned that evening, horribly drunk, almost setting fire to the house, striking one of the horses a blow with a pickax, and finally went to sleep in the mud out in the rain, thanks to my generosity. They begged me, the next day, not to give him any more money. Liquor made him furious, and when he had two sous in his pocket he drank it. The innkeeper added: 'To give him money is to kill him.' This man had absolutely never had any money, save a few centimes thrown to him by travellers, and he knew no other destination for it but the alehouse.

"Then I passed some hours in my room with an open book which I made a pretence of reading, but without accomplishing anything except to look at this brute. My son! my son! I was trying to dis-

cover if he was anything like me. By dint of searching I believed I recognized some similar lines in the brow and about the nose. And I was immediately convinced of a resemblance which only different clothing and the hideous mane of the man disguised.

"I could not stay there very long without being suspected, and I set out with breaking heart, after having left with the innkeeper some money to ease the existence of his stable-boy.

"For six years I have lived with this thought, this horrible uncertainty, this abominable doubt, and each year an irresistible force drags me back to Pont-Labbé. Each year I condemn myself to the torture of seeing this brute wallow in his filth, imagining that he resembles me, and of seeking, always in vain, to be helpful to him. And each year I come back more undecided, more tortured, more anxious.

"I have tried to have him educated, but he is an incurable idiot. I have tried to render life less painful to him, but he is an incurable drunkard and uses all the money that is given him for drink. And he knows very well how to sell his new clothes to get cognac.

"I have tried to arouse pity in his employer for him, that he might treat him more gently, always offering him money. The innkeeper, astonished, finally remarked very wisely: 'Everything you do for him, sir, will only ruin him. He must be kept like a prisoner. As soon as he has time given him or favours shown, he becomes vicious. If you wish to do good there are plenty of abandoned children. Choose one that will be worth your trouble.'

"What could I say to that?

"And if I should disclose a suspicion of the doubts which torture me, this brute would certainly turn rogue and exploit me, compromise me, ruin me. He would cry out to me: 'Papa,' as in my dream.

"And I tell myself that I have killed the mother and ruined this atrophied being, larva of the stable, born and bred on a dunghill, this man who, if he had been brought up as others are, might have been like others.

"And you cannot imagine the strange, confused, intolerable sensation I feel in his presence, as I think that this has come from me, that he belongs to me by that intimate bond which binds father to son, that, thanks to the terrible laws of heredity, he is a part of me in a thousand things, by his blood and his flesh, and that he has the same germs of sickness and the same ferments of passion.

"And I have always an unappeasable and painful desire to see him, and the sight of him makes me suffer horribly; and from my window down there I look at him for hours as he pitchforks and carts away the dung of the beasts, repeating to myself: 'That is my son!'

"And I feel, sometimes, an intolerable desire to embrace him. But I have never even touched his filthy hand."

The Academician was silent. And his companion, the politician, murmured: "Yes, indeed; we ought to think a little more about the children who have no father."

Then a breath of wind came up, and the great

tree shook its clusters, and enveloped with a fine, odorous cloud the two old men, who took long draughts of the sweet perfume.

And the senator added: "It is fine to be twenty-five years old, and even to become a father like that."

SAINT ANTHONY

HE was called Saint Anthony, because his name was Anthony, and also, perhaps, because he was a good fellow, jovial, a lover of practical jokes, a tremendous eater and a heavy drinker and a great man for the servant girls, although he was sixty years old.

He was a big peasant of the district of Caux, with a red face, large chest and stomach, and perched on two long legs that seemed too slight for the bulk of his body.

He was a widower and lived alone with his two men-servants and a maid on his farm, which he ran with shrewd economy. He was careful of his own interests, understood business and the raising of cattle, and farming. His two sons and his three daughters, who had married well, were living in the neighbourhood and came to dine with their father once a month. His vigour of body was famous in all the countryside. "He is as strong as Saint Anthony," had become a kind of proverb.

At the time of the Prussian invasion Saint Anthony, at the wine shop, promised to eat an army, for he was a braggart, like a true Norman, and a bit of a coward and a blusterer. He banged his fist on the wooden table, making the cups and the brandy glasses dance, and cried with the exaggerated trucu-

lence of the good fellow, his face flushed and a sly look in his eye: "I shall have to eat some of them, nom de Dieu!" He reckoned that the Prussians would not come as far as Tanneville, but when he heard they were at Rautôt he never went out of the house, and constantly watched the road from the little window of his kitchen, expecting at any moment to see the bayonets go by.

One morning, as he was eating his midday meal with the servants, the door opened and the mayor of the commune, Maître Chicot, appeared, followed by a soldier wearing a black helmet with a copper spike. Saint Anthony bounded to his feet and all his household looked at him, expecting to see him slash the Prussian. But he merely shook hands with the mayor, who said:

"Here is one for you, Saint Anthony. They came last night. Don't do anything foolish, above all things, for they talk of shooting and burning everything if there is the slightest unpleasantness. I have given you warning. Give him something to eat; he looks like a good fellow. Good-day. I am going to call on the rest. There are enough for all." And he went out.

Old Anthony, who had turned pale, looked at the Prussian. He was a big, young fellow, plump and fair-skinned, with blue eyes, fair hair, and hair on his face to his cheek bones, who looked stupid, timid and good humoured. The shrewd Norman read him at once, and, reassured, he made him a sign to sit down. Then he said: "Will you have some soup?"

The stranger did not understand. Anthony then

became bolder, and pushing a plateful of soup right under his nose, he said: "Here, swallow that, you big pig!"

The soldier answered "Ya," and began to eat greedily, while the farmer, triumphant, feeling he had regained his reputation, winked his eye at the servants, who were making strange grimaces, what with their terror and their desire to laugh.

When the Prussian had devoured his plateful, Saint Anthony gave him another, which disappeared in like manner; but he flinched at the third which the farmer tried to insist on his eating, saying: "Come, put that into your stomach; we will fatten you or we'll know the reason why, you pig!"

The soldier, understanding only that they wanted to make him eat all his soup, laughed in a contented manner, making a sign to show that he could not hold any more.

Then Saint Anthony, become quite familiar, tapped him on the stomach, saying: "My, there is plenty in my pig's belly!" But suddenly he began to writhe with laughter, unable to speak. An idea had struck him which made him choke with mirth. "That's it, that's it, Saint Anthony and his pig. There's my pig!" And the three servants burst out laughing in their turn.

The old fellow was so pleased that he had the brandy brought in, good stuff, *fil en dix*, and treated every one. They clinked glasses with the Prussian, who clacked his tongue by way of flattery to show that he enjoyed it. And Saint Anthony exclaimed in his face: "Eh, is not that superfine? You don't get anything like that in your home, pig!"

From that time Father Anthony never went out without his Prussian. He had got what he wanted. This was his vengeance, the vengeance of an old humbug. And the whole countryside, which was in terror, laughed to split its sides at Saint Anthony's joke. Truly, there was no one like him when it came to humour. No one but he would have thought of a thing like that. He was a born joker!

He went to see his neighbours every day, arm in arm with his German, whom he introduced in a jovial manner, tapping him on the shoulder: "See, here is my pig; look and see if he is not growing fat, the animal!"

And the peasants would beam with smiles. "He is so comical, that fellow, Antoine!"

"I will sell him to you, Cesaire, for thirty francs."

"I will take him, Antoine, and I invite you to eat some black pudding."

"What I want is his feet."

"Feel his belly; you will see that it is all fat."

And they all winked at each other, but dared not laugh too loud, for fear the Prussian might finally suspect they were laughing at him. Anthony, alone growing bolder every day, pinched his thighs, exclaiming, "Nothing but fat"; tapped his hips, shouting, "That is all bacon"; lifted him up in his arms like those of an old Colossus who could have lifted an anvil, declaring, "He weighs six hundred and no waste."

He had got into the habit of making people offer his "pig" something to eat wherever they went together. This was the chief pleasure, the great diversion every day. "Give him whatever you please,

he will swallow everything." And they offered the man bread and butter, potatoes, cold meat, chitterlings, which caused the remark, "Some of your own, and choice ones."

The soldier, stupid and gentle, ate from politeness, charmed at these attentions, making himself ill rather than refuse, and he was actually growing fat and his uniform becoming tight for him. This delighted Saint Anthony, who said: "You know, my pig, that we shall have to have another cage made for you."

They had, however, become the best friends in the world, and when the old fellow went to attend to his business in the neighbourhood the Prussian accompanied him for the simple pleasure of being with him.

The weather was severe; it was freezing hard. The terrible winter of 1870 seemed to bring all the plagues upon France at the same time.

Father Antoine, who made provision beforehand, and took advantage of every opportunity, foreseeing that manure would be scarce for the spring farming, bought from a neighbour who happened to be in need of money all that he had, and it was agreed that he should go every evening with his cart to get a load.

So every day at twilight he set out for the farm of Haules, half a league distant, always accompanied by his "pig." And each time it was great fun to feed the animal. All the neighbours ran over there as they would go to high mass on Sunday.

But the soldier began to suspect something, and when they laughed too loud he would roll

his eyes uneasily, and sometimes they lighted up with anger.

One evening when he had eaten his fill he refused to swallow another morsel, and attempted to rise to leave the table. But Saint Anthony stopped him by a turn of the wrist and, placing his two powerful hands on his shoulders, he sat him down again so roughly that the chair smashed under him.

A wild burst of laughter broke forth, and Anthony, beaming, picked up his pig, acted as though he were dressing his wounds, and exclaimed: "Since you will not eat, you shall drink, nom de Dieu!" And they went to the tavern to get some brandy.

The soldier rolled his wicked eyes, but he drank, nevertheless; he drank as long as they wanted him, and Saint Anthony kept up with him, to the great delight of his companions.

The Norman, red as a tomato, his eyes ablaze, filled up the glasses and clinked, saying: "Here's to you!" And the Prussian, without speaking a word, poured down one after another glassfuls of cognac.

It was a contest, a battle, a revenge! Who would drink the most, by God! They could neither of them stand any more when the bottle was emptied. But neither was conquered. They had tied, that was all. They would have to begin again the next day.

They went out staggering and started for home, walking beside the dung-cart, which was drawn along slowly by two horses.

Snow began to fall and the moonless night was sadly lighted by this dead whiteness on the plain. The men began to feel the cold, and this aggra-

vated their intoxication. Saint Anthony, annoyed at not being the victor, amused himself by shoving his companion so as to make him fall over into the ditch. The other would dodge backwards, and each time he did he uttered some German expression in an angry tone, which made the peasant roar with laughter. Finally the Prussian lost his temper, and just as Anthony was rolling towards him he responded with such a terrific blow with his fist that the colossus staggered.

Then, excited by the brandy, the old man seized the young one round the waist, shook him for a few moments as he would have done with a little child, and pitched him at random to the other side of the road. Then, satisfied with this piece of work, he crossed his arms and began to laugh afresh.

But the soldier picked himself up quickly, his head bare, his helmet having rolled off, and drawing his sword he rushed over to Father Anthony.

When he saw him coming the peasant seized his whip by the top of the handle, his big hollywood whip, straight, strong and supple as the sinew of an ox.

The Prussian approached, his head down, making a lunge with his sword, sure of killing his adversary. But the old fellow, squarely hitting the blade, the point of which would have pierced his stomach, turned it aside, and with the butt end of the whip struck the soldier a sharp blow on the temple and he fell to the ground.

Then he gazed aghast, stupefied with amazement, at the body, twitching convulsively at first and then lying prone and motionless. He bent over it, turned

it on its back, and gazed at it for some time. The man's eyes were closed, and blood trickled from a wound at the side of his forehead. Although it was night, Father Anthony could distinguish the bloodstain on the white snow.

He remained there, at his wit's end, while his cart continued slowly on its way.

What was he to do? He would be shot! They would burn his farm, ruin his district! What should he do? What should he do? How could he hide the body, conceal the fact of his death, deceive the Prussians? He heard voices in the distance, amid the utter stillness of the snow. All at once he roused himself, and picking up the helmet he placed it on his victim's head. Then, seizing him round the body, he lifted him up in his arms, and thus running with him, he overtook his team, and threw the body on top of the manure. Once in his own house he would think up some plan.

He walked slowly, racking his brain, but without result. He saw, he felt, that he was lost. He entered his courtyard. A light was shining in one of the attic windows; his servant was not asleep. He hastily backed his wagon to the edge of the manure hollow. He thought that by overturning the manure the body lying on top of it would fall into the ditch and be buried beneath it, and he dumped the cart.

As he had foreseen, the man was buried beneath the manure. Anthony evened it down with his fork, which he stuck in the ground beside it. He called his stableman, told him to put up the horses, and went to his room.

He went to bed, still thinking of what he had best do, but no ideas came to him. His apprehension increased in the quiet of his room. They would shoot him! He was bathed in perspiration from fear, his teeth chattered, he rose shivering, not being able to stay in bed.

He went downstairs to the kitchen, took the bottle of brandy from the sideboard and carried it upstairs. He drank two large glasses, one after another, adding a fresh intoxication to the late one, without quieting his mental anguish. He had done a pretty stroke of work, by God! Idiot that he was!

He paced up and down, trying to think of some stratagem, some explanations, some cunning trick, and from time to time he rinsed his mouth with a swallow of *fil en dix* to give him courage.

But no ideas came to him, not one.

Towards midnight his watch dog, a kind of half wolf called "Dévorant," began to howl frantically. Father Anthony shuddered to the marrow of his bones, and each time the beast began his long and lugubrious wail the old man's skin turned to gooseflesh.

He had sunk into a chair, his legs weak, stupefied, done up, waiting anxiously for Dévorant to set up another howl, and starting convulsively from nervousness caused by terror.

The clock downstairs struck five. The dog was still howling. The peasant was almost insane. He rose to go and let the dog loose, so that he should not hear him. He went downstairs, opened the hall door, and stepped out into the darkness. The snow

was still falling. The earth was all white, the farm buildings standing out like black patches. He approached the kennel. The dog was dragging at his chain. He unfastened it. Dévorant gave a bound, then stopped short, his hair bristling, his legs rigid, his muzzle in the air, his nose pointed towards the manure heap.

Saint Anthony, trembling from head to foot, faltered:

"What's the matter with you, you dirty hound?" and he walked a few steps forward, gazing at the indistinct outlines, the sombre shadow of the courtyard.

Then he saw a form, the form of a man sitting on the manure heap!

He gazed at it, paralyzed by fear, and breathing hard. But all at once he saw, close by, the handle of the manure fork which was sticking in the ground. He snatched it up and in one of those transports of fear that will make the greatest coward brave he rushed forward to see what it was.

It was he, his Prussian, come to life, covered with filth from his bed of manure, which had kept him warm. He had sat down mechanically, and remained there in the snow which sprinkled down, all covered with dirt and blood as he was, and still stupid from drinking, dazed by the blow and exhausted from his wound.

He perceived Anthony, and too sodden to understand anything, he made an attempt to rise. But the moment the old man recognized him, he foamed with rage like a wild animal.

"Ah, pig! pig!" he sputtered. "You are not

dead! You are going to denounce me now — wait — wait!"

And rushing on the German with all the strength of his arms he flung the raised fork like a lance and buried the four prongs full length in his breast.

The soldier fell over on his back, uttering a long death moan, while the old peasant, drawing the fork out of his breast, plunged it over and over again into his abdomen, his stomach, his throat, like a madman, piercing the body from head to foot, as it still quivered, and the blood gushed out in streams.

Finally he stopped, exhausted by the violence of his labours, swallowing great mouthfuls of air, calmed down by the completion of the murder.

As the cocks were beginning to crow in the poultry yard and it was near daybreak, he set to work to bury the man.

He dug a hole in the manure till he reached the earth, dug down further, working wildly, in a frenzy of strength with frantic motions of his arms and body.

When the pit was deep enough he rolled the corpse into it with the fork, covered it with earth, which he stamped down for some time, and then put back the manure, and he smiled as he saw the thick snow finishing his work and covering up its traces with a white sheet.

He then stuck the fork in the manure and went into the house. His bottle, still half full of brandy, stood on the table. He emptied it at a draught, threw himself on his bed and slept heavily.

He woke up sober, his mind calm and clear, capable of judgment and forethought.

At the end of an hour he was going about the country making inquiries everywhere for his soldier. He went to see the Prussian officer to find out why they had taken away his man.

As every one knew what good friends they were, no one suspected him. He even directed the search, declaring that the Prussian went to see the girls every evening.

An old retired gendarme who had an inn in the next village, and a pretty daughter, was arrested and shot.

WALTER SCHNAFFS' ADVENTURE

SINCE his entrance into France, with the army of the invasion, Walter Schnaffs judged himself the most unfortunate of men. He was stout, walked with difficulty, puffed much, and suffered frightfully with his feet, which were very broad and fat. Outwardly, he seemed peaceful and benevolent, neither brave nor bloodthirsty, the father of four children whom he adored, and married to a young, blond woman whose caresses and cares and tenderness he desperately regretted every evening. He loved to rise late and go to bed early, to eat slowly of good things and drink beer in cafés. He felt that all that was sweet in existence disappeared with this life; and he had at heart a terrible fear and hatred, both instinctive and reasonable, of cannons, guns, revolvers, and swords, and especially of bayonets, feeling himself incapable of maneuvering rapidly enough to defend his great body with such a weapon.

And, when night had come and he had lain down to sleep upon the earth, wrapped in his blanket by the side of his comrades, who were snoring, he thought long of his home, left behind him in Germany, and of the dangers sown all along the route. "If I should be killed what would become of the little ones?" he thought. "Who would feed them and

bring them up?" At that very moment they were not rich, in spite of the debts he had contracted before he started, in order to leave them a little money. And sometimes Walter Schnaffs wept.

At the beginning of a battle he felt his knees growing so weak that he would have fallen had he not known that the whole army would pass over his body. The whistling of the bullets made his hair stand on end. For some months he lived thus, in terror and in anguish.

His army corps was advancing toward Normandy. One day he was sent out to reconnoitre with a small detachment which was simply to explore a part of the country and report immediately. All seemed calm in the country; nothing indicated a prepared resistance.

The Prussians were descending quietly into a little valley divided by deep ravines, when a violent fusillade stopped them short, laying low one in twenty of their men; and a company of sharp-shooters, coming out suddenly from a little wood, plunged forward with their bayonets fixed.

Walter Schnaffs remained motionless at first, so surprised and dismayed that he did not even think of fleeing. Then a foolish desire to run away seized him; but he thought immediately that he could run only like a tortoise in comparison with the thin Frenchmen, who were coming on in leaps and bounds, like a troop of goats. Then, perceiving but six steps before him a large ditch full of brushwood covered with dead leaves, he jumped in with both feet, without even thinking how deep it was, as one might jump from a bridge into a river. He went

like a dart, through a thick layer of creepers and sharp twigs, which tore his face and hands as he fell, and found himself seated heavily on a bed of stones. Raising his eyes, he could see the sky through the hole that he had made. This hole might lead to his discovery, and he dragged himself along cautiously, on all fours, at the bottom of this ditch, under a roof of enlaced branches, going with all speed possible as far as he could from the combat. Then he stopped and seated himself, crouching like a hare in the midst of the tall dry grass.

For some time longer he heard the reports of the guns and the cries of the wounded, then the clamour of the struggle grew feebler and finally ceased. All became still and calm.

Suddenly something moved near him. He had a fearful shock. It was a little bird, which, standing upon a branch, had shaken the dry leaves. For nearly an hour, the man's heart beat with heavy, rapid strokes.

Night came on, filling the ravine with shadows. The soldier began to think. What was he going to do? What would become of him? Should he rejoin his regiment? But how? And where? Was it necessary to begin over again the life of anguish, of fear, of fatigue and suffering that he had led since the beginning of the war? No! He would never have the courage. He would never have the energy necessary to support the marches and confront the dangers of each minute.

But what was to be done? He could not remain in this ravine and conceal himself there until the end of hostilities. Certainly not. If he were not

obliged to eat, this prospect might not have deterred him; but he must eat and eat every day.

Thus he found himself alone, under arms, in uniform, in the enemy's territory, far from those able to defend him. Cold shivers ran through his body. Suddenly he thought: "If only I were a prisoner!" And his heart trembled with the desire, a violent, immoderate desire to be made prisoner by the French. He would be safely lodged and fed, under shelter from bullets and swords, without possible apprehension, in a good prison well guarded. A prisoner! What a dream!

His resolution was made immediately: "I will go and give myself up as a prisoner." He got up resolved to execute his project without a minute's delay. But he remained there, suddenly assailed by cowardly reflections and new fears.

Where should he go to give himself up? And how? On which side? And frightful images of death invaded his soul. He might run some terrible dangers in venturing out alone through the country in his metal-pointed helmet. If he should meet some country people? These peasants, seeing a Prussian soldier lost, a defenceless Prussian, would kill him like a stray dog! They would murder him, with their forks, their pickaxes, their scythes, their shovels! They would reduce him to pulp and make mince-meat of him with the savagery of exasperated conquerors.

And if he should meet some sharpshooters? These madmen, without law or discipline, would shoot him to amuse themselves, to pass away an hour, for the fun of seeing his face. And he could

already imagine himself against a wall, facing a dozen gun barrels, whose little round, black holes seemed to be looking at him.

And if he should meet the French army? The advance guard would take him for a spy, for some brave and hardy rogue of a trooper sent out alone to reconnoitre, and would shoot him down at once. And he could already hear the irregular reports of the guns of soldiers concealed in the woods, while he, standing in the middle of a field, would be riddled with bullets like a strainer, and he could feel them entering his flesh. He sat down again in despair. His situation appeared to be hopeless.

Night had now come, night still and dark. He no longer moved and started at every unknown and slight noise which passed in the shadows. A rabbit, bobbing up and down on the edge of his burrow, almost put Walter Schnaffs to flight. The cries of the screech-owl tore his soul, rending it with sudden fear, as painful as wounds. He stared with his big eyes, trying to penetrate the shadows; and he imagined every moment that he heard some one walking near him.

After interminable hours and the anguish of the damned, he perceived through his ceiling of branches that the sky was becoming bright. Then immense relief came to him; his members relaxed in sudden repose; his heart was easy; his eyes closed. He fell asleep.

When he awoke, the sun seemed to him to be nearly in the middle of the sky; it should, therefore, be midday. No noise troubled the dull peace of the fields; and Walter Schnaffs perceived that he was

seized with acute hunger. He yawned, his mouth watering at the thought of sausage, the good military sausage, and he got a pain in his stomach.

He stood up, took some steps, felt that his legs were feeble, and sat down again to think. For three or four hours more he argued for and against, changing his mind every moment, unhappy, drawn this way and that by the most contradictory arguments.

One idea seemed to him logical and practical: that was to watch until some villager passed, alone, without arms or dangerous tools, to run up to him and deliver himself into his hands, making him understand that he was giving himself up. Then he removed his helmet, the point of which might betray him, and put his head out of his hole with infinite precautions.

No single human being was in sight. Down there, to the right, a little village sent to the sky the smoke from its roofs, the smoke from its kitchens! To the left, he perceived at the end of an avenue of trees, a great castle flanked with turrets. He waited until evening, suffering frightfully, seeing nothing but flocks of crows, and hearing nothing but the dull rumbling of his stomach.

Again the night fell upon him. He stretched himself out at the bottom of his retreat and fell into a feverish sleep, haunted by nightmares, the sleep of a famished man. The dawn again rose upon him. He again set himself to watch, but the countryside was as empty as the day before. And a new fear entered the mind of Walter Schnaffs — the fear of dying of hunger. He saw himself stretched

at the bottom of that hole, on his back, his eyes closed. Then some animals, small animals of every sort, would come and begin to eat his dead body, attacking him everywhere simultaneously, slipping in under his garments to bite his cold flesh. And a great raven would pick his eyes out with its sharp beak.

Then he became mad, imagining that he was swooning from weakness and could no longer walk. And he prepared to start toward the village, resolved to dare all, to defy all; but he perceived three peasants going to the fields with their forks on their shoulders, and he plunged back into his hiding-place.

When evening darkened the plain again, he got out slowly from the ditch, and started on the way, crouching, fearful, his heart beating, towards the far-off castle, preferring to enter that rather than the village, which seemed to him as dangerous as a den of tigers.

The lower windows were brilliantly lighted, one of them being open; and a strong odour of food, cooked food, came from it, entering Walter Schnaffs' nostrils and penetrating to the depths of his body, causing his body to become tense and his breath to come in gasps. It drew him irresistibly, inspiring his heart with desperate audacity. And suddenly, without thinking, he appeared at the window with his helmet on his head.

Eight servants were dining around a big table. Suddenly a maid sat still with her mouth open, letting her glass fall, her eyes staring. Then, every glance followed hers.

They perceived the enemy! My God! The Prussians are attacking the castle!

At first this was a single cry, made up of eight cries in eight different tones, a cry of horrible fear, then there was a tumultuous moving, a hustling, a *mêlée*, a general flight for the farthest door. Chairs fell, men knocked over the women to get ahead of them. In two seconds the room was empty, abandoned, with a table covered with eatables in front of Walter Schnaffs, who stood still in amazement outside the window.

After some moments of hesitation, he jumped over the window-sill, and advanced towards the plates. His keen hunger made him tremble like one in a fever; but terror still held him and paralyzed him. He listened. The whole house seemed to tremble; doors opened and shut, and rapid steps sounded on the floor above. The uneasy Prussian strained his ears to catch these confused noises; then he heard heavy sounds as if bodies were falling in the soft earth at the foot of the walls, human bodies jumping from the first story.

Then all movement, all agitation ceased, and the great castle became silent as a tomb.

Walter Schnaffs seated himself before a plate still intact, and began to eat. He ate with great mouthfuls as if he feared being interrupted too soon, before he had devoured enough. He threw the pieces with both hands into his mouth, opened like a trap; huge pieces of food descended into his stomach, one after the other, straining his throat in passing. Sometimes he interrupted himself, feeling ready to burst, like an over-filled pipe. He took

the cider pitcher and poured its contents down his throat, as one washes out a stopped-up conduit.

He emptied all the plates, all the dishes, and all the bottles; then, full of liquid and eatables, besotted, red, shaking with hiccoughs, his mouth greasy, his mind troubled, he unbuttoned his uniform in order to breathe, incapable of taking another step. His eyes closed, his ideas became vague; he dropped his heavy head in his crossed arms on the table, and sweetly lost all consciousness of his surroundings.

The waning crescent lighted the horizon vaguely through the trees of the park. It was the cold hour which precedes the day. Sometimes a ray of the moon glittered like a point of steel among the shadows of the thicket.

The quiet castle appeared like a great, black silhouette against the clear sky. Two windows alone on the ground floor were still brilliantly lighted. Suddenly, a voice of thunder cried:

"Forward! To the assault! Come on, boys!"

Then, in an instant, the doors, shutters, even the windows, were broken down by the rush of men who dashed forward, breaking and overturning all in their way, invading the house. In an instant, fifty men, armed to the teeth, bounded into the kitchen where Walter Schnaffs was peacefully sleeping; and, presenting to his breast their loaded guns, they seized him, rolled him over, threw him down, and bound him hand and foot.

He was breathless with astonishment, too dazed to understand, beaten, battered and mad with terror.

Suddenly a fat military-looking man, covered with gold lace, planted his foot upon his body, calling out vociferously:

"You are my prisoner! Surrender!"

The Prussian understood only the single word "prisoner," and groaned: "Ja, ja, ja!"

He was taken up, bound to a chair, and examined with a lively curiosity by his conquerors, who were puffing like porpoises. Many of them sat down, overcome by emotion and fatigue.

He smiled; he could smile now, sure at last of being a prisoner!

An officer entered and announced:

"Colonel, the enemy is put to flight. Many of them appear to have been wounded. We are now masters of the place."

The fat officer, wiping his brow, shouted: "Victory!" And, drawing a little notebook from his pocket, he wrote:

"After a desperate struggle, the Prussians had to beat a retreat, taking their dead and wounded with them, estimated at about fifty men. Several remain in our hands."

The young officer inquired: "Colonel, what measures are to be taken?"

The colonel replied: "We shall fall back in order to avoid a resumption of the offensive with artillery and superior forces." And he gave the order to depart.

The column re-formed in the shadow under the wall of the castle, and set off, surrounding, with great care, Walter Schnaffs, bound, and guarded by

six warriors with revolvers in hand. Scouts were sent out to reconnoitre the route. They advanced with great care, halting from time to time. At daylight, they arrived at the Subprefect's, in La Roche-Oysel, whose national guard had accomplished this feat of arms.

The people of the town, anxious and excited, awaited them. When they saw the prisoner's helmet fearful shouts arose. Women lifted up their hands, old people wept, a grandfather threw his crutch at the Prussian and wounded the nose of one of his guards. The colonel shouted: "Look out for the safety of the prisoner!"

Finally, they came to the town hall. The prison was opened, and Walter Schnaffs was thrown in, freed from his fetters. Two hundred men, in arms, mounted guard on the building.

Then, in spite of the symptoms of indigestion which had been troubling him for some time, the Prussian, mad with joy, began to dance, to dance madly, raising his arms and legs and uttering frenzied cries, until he fell exhausted against the wall. He was a prisoner! He was saved.

And thus it was that the castle of Champignet was retaken from the enemy after only six hours of occupation.

Colonel Ratier, cloth merchant, who accomplished this feat at the head of the National Guards of La Roche-Oysel, was decorated for it.

THE TOMB

ON the seventeenth of July, eighteen hundred and eighty-three, at half past two o'clock in the morning, the caretaker of Béziers cemetery, who lived in a little house at the end of the burying ground, was awakened by the yelping of his dog, which was locked in the kitchen.

He immediately went downstairs, and saw that the animal was scenting something under the door and barking furiously, as though some tramp had been prowling about the house. Vincent, the caretaker, took up his gun and went out cautiously.

His dog ran off in the direction of General Bonnet's Avenue and stopped short in front of Madam Tomoiseau's monument.

The caretaker, advancing cautiously, soon noticed a dim light in the direction of Malenvers Avenue. He slipped in amongst the tombstones and witnessed a most horrible deed of desecration.

A young man had disinterred the corpse of a young woman, buried the day before, and he was dragging it out of the grave.

A small dark lantern, placed on a pile of earth, lit up this hideous scene.

Vincent, the caretaker, pounced upon the criminal, felled him to the ground, bound his hands and took him to the police station.

He was a young lawyer from the city, rich and well thought of. His name was Courbataille.

He was tried. The public prosecutor recalled the monstrous deeds committed by Sergeant Bertrand, and aroused the audience.

The crowd was thrilled with indignation. As soon as the magistrate sat down the cry arose: "Put him to death! Put him to death!" The president had great difficulty in restoring silence.

Then he said, in a serious tone of voice:

"Accused, what have you to say in your defence?"

Courbataille, who had refused counsel, arose. He was a handsome youth, large, dark, with an open countenance, strong features, and a fearless eye.

The crowd began to hiss.

He was not disconcerted, but commenced speaking with a slightly husky voice, a little low in the beginning, but gradually gaining in strength:

"Your Honour,

"Gentlemen of the jury,

"I have very little to say. The woman whose tomb I violated was my mistress. I loved her.

"I loved her, not with a sensual love, not simply from kindness of soul and heart, but with an absolute, perfect love, with mad passion.

"Listen to what I have to say:

"When I first met her, I felt a strange sensation on seeing her. It was not astonishment, nor admiration, for it was not what is called love at first sight, but it was a delightful sensation, as though I had been plunged in a tepid bath. Her movements captivated me, her voice enchanted me, it gave me infinite pleasure to watch everything about her. It

also seemed to me that I had known her for a long time, that I had seen her before. She seemed to have some of my spirit within her.

"She seemed to me like an answer to an appeal from my soul, to this vague and continuous appeal which forces us toward Hope throughout the whole course of our lives.

"When I became a little better acquainted with her, the mere thought of seeing her again filled me with a deep and exquisite agitation; the touch of her hand in mine was such a joy to me that I had never imagined the like before; her smile made my eyes shine with joy, and made me feel like running about, dancing, rolling on the ground.

"Then she became my mistress.

"She was more than that to me, she was my life itself. I hoped for nothing more on earth, I wished for nothing more, I longed for nothing more.

"Well, one evening, as we were taking a rather long walk by the bank of the stream, we were caught by the rain. She felt cold.

"The next day she had inflammation of the lungs. Eight days later she died.

"During those dying hours, astonishment and fear prevented me from understanding or thinking.

"When she was dead, I was so stunned by brutal despair that I was unable to think. I wept.

"During all the horrible phases of interment my wild, excessive grief was the sorrow of a man beside himself, a sort of sensual physical grief.

"Then when she was gone, when she was under the ground, my mind suddenly became clear, and I passed through a train of mental suffering so terrible

that even the love she had given me was dear at such a price.

"Then I was seized with an obsession.

"I shall never see her again.

"After reflecting on that for a whole day, it maddens you.

"Think of it! A being is there, one whom you adore, a unique being, for in the whole wide world there is no one who resembles her. This being has given herself to you, with you she creates this mysterious union called love. Her glance seems to you vaster than space, more charming than the world, her bright glance full of tender smiles. This being loves you. When she speaks to you her voice overwhelms you with happiness.

"And suddenly she disappears! Think of it! She disappears not only from your sight, but from everybody's. She is dead. Do you understand what that word means? Never, never, never more, nowhere, will this being exist. Those eyes will never see again. Never will this voice, never will any voice like this, among human voices, pronounce one word in the same way that she pronounced it.

"There will never be another face born like hers. Never, never! The cast of statues is kept; the stamp that reproduces objects with the same outlines and the same colours is preserved. But this body and this face will never be seen again on this earth. And still there will be born thousands of beings, millions, thousands of millions, and even more, and among all these women there will never be found one like her. Can that be possible? It makes one mad to think of it!

"She lived twenty years, no more, and she has disappeared forever, forever, forever! She thought, she smiled, she loved me. Now there is nothing more. The flies which die in the autumn are of as much importance as we in creation. Nothing more! And I thought how her body, her fresh, warm body, so soft, so white, so beautiful, was rotting away in the depths of a box under the ground. And her soul, her mind, her love — where were they?

"Never to see her again! Never again! My mind was haunted by the thought of that decomposing body, which I, however, might still recognize!

"I set out with a shovel, a lantern and a hammer. I climbed over the cemetery wall. I found the hole where her grave was. It had not yet been entirely filled up. I uncovered the coffin, and raised one of the planks. An awful odour, the abominable breath of putrefaction, arose in my face. Oh, her bed, perfumed with iris!

"However, I opened the coffin and thrust in my lighted lantern, and saw her. Her face was blue, swollen, horrible! Black liquid had flowed from her mouth.

"She! It was she! I was seized with horror. But I put out my arm and caught her hair to pull this monstrous face towards me! It was at that moment I was arrested.

"All night I carried with me, as one retains the perfume of a woman after a sexual embrace, the filthy smell of this putrefaction, the odour of my beloved!

"Do what you like with me."

A strange silence seemed to hang over the hall.

People appeared to be awaiting something more. The jury withdrew to deliberate. When they returned after a few minutes, the accused did not seem to have any fears, nor even any thoughts. In the traditional formula the judge informed him that his peers had found him not guilty.

He did not make a movement, but the public applauded.

A TRAVELLER'S NOTES

SEVEN o'clock. A whistle blows; we are off. The train passes over the turnplates with the noise of stage thunder, then it plunges into the night, panting, puffing up its steam, throwing gleams of red light on passing walls, hedges, woods, and fields.

We are six, three on each seat, under the light of the lamp. Opposite me is a stout lady with a stout gentleman, an old married couple. A hunchback sits in the left corner; beside me is a young married pair, or, at least, a young couple! Are they married? The young woman is pretty and seems modest, but she smells too strongly of perfume. What kind of perfume is it? I know it without being able to name it. Ah! now I've got it. *Peau d'Espagne?* That tells nothing. Let us wait and see.

The stout lady looks at the young woman with an air of hostility which sets me to thinking. The stout gentleman closes his eyes. Already! The hunchback has rolled himself up into a ball. I no longer see where his legs are. One sees nothing but his bright eye under a skull cap with a red tassel. Then he shrinks into his travelling-shawl. He looks like a small parcel thrown down on the seat.

The old lady alone stays awake, suspicious, un-

easy, like a watchman whose duty it is to guard the order and morality of the occupants of the carriage.

The young people do not move; their knees are under the same shawl, and their eyes are open, but they do not speak; are they married?

I also pretend to sleep, and watch.

Nine o'clock. The stout lady is about to give in, she closes her eyes spasmodically, and her head drops on her breast, but she lifts it up again by fits and starts. Then at last she goes to sleep.

O sleep! ridiculous mystery which makes faces appear so grotesque, you are the revealer of human ugliness. You uncover all shortcomings, all deformities and all defects. You turn every face touched by you into a caricature.

I rise and put the light blue shade over the lamp, and then I also go to sleep.

Every now and then the stopping of the train awakens me. An employee calls out the name of a town, and then we go on.

Here is the dawn. We are running alongside the Rhône, which is going down to the Mediterranean. Everybody is sleeping. The young people have their arms around each other. One of the feet of the young woman is peeping from under the shawl. She is wearing white stockings! That is commonplace: they are married! The air is not fresh in the compartment, and I open a window to change it. The cold coming in awakens every one, except the hunchback, who is snoring under his cover.

The ugliness of the faces becomes more accentuated in the light of the new day.

The stout lady, with red face and untidy hair,

looks awful. She glances around spitefully at her neighbours. The young woman looks smilingly at her companion. If she were not married she would have first looked at her mirror.

Here we are at Marseilles. Twenty minutes' stop. I breakfast. We go on. The hunchback is missing, and we have, instead, two old gentlemen.

Then the two married couples, the old and the young, unpack their provisions. A chicken here, cold veal there, pepper and salt in paper, pickles in a handkerchief — everything to make you disgusted with food forever. I know nothing more common, more vulgar, more out of place, and more ill-bred than to eat in a carriage where there are other passengers.

If it is freezing, open the windows. If it is hot, close them and smoke your pipe, even if you detest tobacco; begin to sing, to bark, indulge in the most annoying eccentricities, take off your shoes and stockings and pare your toe-nails; in short, pay these ill-bred people in their own coin for their lack of good manners.

The far-sighted man will carry a bottle of benzine or petrol to sprinkle on the cushions when the people beside him begin to eat. Everything is permitted, anything is too good for the boors who poison you with the odour of their food.

Now we are running beside the blue sea. The sun beats down upon the coast dotted with charming towns.

Here is Saint-Raphaël. Yonder is Saint-Tropez, the little capital of that deserted, unknown, and delightful country called the Mountains of the

Moors. A broad river not spanned by any bridge, the Argens, separates this wild peninsula from the continent, and one can walk there for a whole day without meeting a soul. Here, the villages perched upon the mountains, are the same as they were in former times, with their Oriental houses, their arcades, their low-vaulted doors ornamented with sculpture.

No railroad, no public conveyance penetrates into these splendid wooded valleys. Only an old mail-boat carries the letters from Hyères and Saint-Tropez.

On we go. Here is Cannes, so pretty on the shore of its two gulfs, opposite the islands of Lérins, which would make two perfect paradises for the sick, if they could be connected with the mainland.

Here is the Gulf of Juan; the armoured squadron seems to lie asleep on the water.

Here is Nice. There is apparently an exhibition in the town. Let us go to see it.

Following a boulevard, which seems like a marsh, we reach a building on an elevation, in doubtful taste, which seems a miniature replica of the great palace of the Trocadéro.

Inside there are some people walking about in the midst of a chaos of boxes. The Exhibition, which has been open for a long time, will doubtless be ready next year!

It would be attractive inside if it were finished. But it is far from that.

Two sections especially attract me: that of the comestibles and that of the Fine Arts. Alas! there really are preserved fruits of Grasse here, and

a thousand other good things to eat. But — it is forbidden to sell them! One may only look at them! And that is so as not to injure the trade of the town! To exhibit sweetmeats for the mere pleasure of looking at them, and forbid anybody to taste them, really seems to be one of the finest inventions of the human mind.

The Fine Arts are — in preparation! Yet some halls are open, where one may see very fine landscapes by Harpignies, Guillemet, Le Poittevin, a superb portrait of Mademoiselle Alice Regnault by Courtois, a delightful Béraud, etc. As for the rest — when they are unpacked!

As one must see everything on visiting a place, I will treat myself to an air trip in the balloon of MM. Godard and Company.

The mistral is blowing. The balloon is swaying in an uneasy way. Suddenly there is an explosion; the cords of the net have broken. The public is forbidden to come within the inclosure, and I also am turned out.

I climb upon my carriage and survey the scene.

Every moment another rope snaps with a singular noise, and the brown skin of the balloon attempts to rise from the meshes that hold it. Then suddenly, under a more violent gust of wind, there is an immense tear from top to bottom of the great ball, which falls together like a limp cloth, torn and dead.

The next morning on awakening I call for the newspapers and read with astonishment: "The tempest now raging on our coast has compelled the management of the captive and free balloons of Nice to empty its great aerostat, in order to avoid

accidents. The system of instantaneous emptying used by M. Godard is one of his inventions that redound most to his honour."

Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh, the dear public!

The entire coast of the Mediterranean is the Eldorado of the chemists. One must be ten times a millionaire to dare purchase even a simple box of cough drops from these haughty merchants, who ask the price of diamonds for their jujubes.

One can go from Nice to Monaco via La Corniche, along the sea coast. There is nothing more charming than this road cut in the rock, which skirts gulfs, passes under arches, and turns and twists along the mountain through wonderful country.

Here is Monaco on its rock, and behind it Monte Carlo. Hush! I can understand how those who like to gamble adore this pretty little town. But how sombre and sad it is for those who do not gamble! There is no other pleasure, no other attraction.

Farther on is Mentone, the hottest place on the coast, and the one most frequented by invalids. There oranges ripen and consumptives are cured.

I take the night train to return to Cannes. In my compartment there are two ladies and a man from Marseilles who is determined to tell stories of railway accidents, murders, and thefts.

"I once knew a Corsican, madame, who came to Paris with his son. I speak of long ago, in the early days of the P. L. M. railway. I joined them, since we were friends, and off we went.

"The son, who was twenty years old, was utterly amazed at the running of the train, and stood

leaning out of the window all the time to watch it. His father kept repeating to him: 'Heh! Take care, Mathéo! Don't lean out too far, or you may hurt yourself.' But the boy did not even answer.

"I said to the father:

"'Let him do it, if it amuses him.'

"But the father repeated:

"'Come now, Mathéo, don't lean out like that.'

"Then, as the son did not answer, he took him by the coat to make him come back into the carriage, and gave it a pull. And then the body fell back on our knees. He was minus his head, madame, for it had been cut off by a tunnel. And the neck was not even bleeding any longer; all the blood had flowed along the line."

One of the ladies heaved a sigh, closed her eyes, and sank upon her neighbour. She had fainted.

IN THE MOONLIGHT

THE Abbé Marignan well deserved to be named after that famous battle. He was a tall, thin, fanatical priest, always in a state of exaltation, but never unjust. All his beliefs were fixed, and they never wavered. He sincerely believed that he understood God, that he penetrated His designs, His wishes, His intentions.

As he walked up and down the garden path of his little country presbytery a question sometimes arose in his mind: "Why did God do that?" Then, imagining himself in God's place, he searched obstinately, and he nearly always found the reason. He was not the man to murmur in transports of pious humility, "O Lord, thy designs are inscrutable!" What he said was: "I am the servant of God; I ought to know the reason for what he does, or to divine it if I do not."

Everything in nature seemed to him created with an absolute and admirable logic. The "why" and the "wherefore" always balanced. The dawns were made to rejoice you on waking, the days to ripen the harvests, the rains to water them, the evenings to prepare for sleeping, and the nights dark for sleep.

The four seasons answered perfectly all the requirements of agriculture; and to him the suspicion

could never have come that nature has no intention, and that everything that lives has accustomed itself, on the contrary, to the harsh necessities of different periods, of climates, and of matter.

But he hated women; he hated them unconsciously, and despised them by instinct. He often repeated the words of Christ, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" and he would add, "One would almost say that God himself was ill-pleased with that particular work of his hands." Woman for him was indeed the "child twelve times impure" of whom the poet speaks. She was the temptress who had ensnared the first man, and who still continued her damnable work; she was the being who is feeble, dangerous, mysteriously disturbing. And even more than her fatal body, he hated her loving soul.

He had often felt women's tenderness dwell in him, and though he knew himself to be unassailable, he grew exasperated at this need of loving which quivers continually in their hearts.

To his mind, God had only created woman to tempt man and to test him. Man should not approach her without defensive precautions, and such fears as one has of an ambush. Woman, indeed, was just like a trap, with her arms extended and her lips open toward a man.

He had toleration only for nuns, rendered harmless by their vows, but he treated them harshly notwithstanding, because, ever at the bottom of their locked hearts, their chastened hearts, he perceived the eternal tenderness that constantly went out even to him, although he was a priest. He felt

that tenderness in their eyes more filled with the ecstasies of piety than those of the monks, in their ecstasies touched with sex, in their loving yearning for Christ, which made him indignant, because it was woman's love, carnal love. He felt that accursed tenderness even in their submissiveness, in the softness of their voices as they spoke to him, in their downcast eyes, and in their tears of resignation when he harshly reproved them. And he would shake the skirts of his cassock on coming out of a convent, and would stride off rapidly, as if in flight from danger.

He had a niece who lived with her mother in a little house near by. He was bent on making her a sister of charity. She was pretty and hare-brained, and a great tease. When the abbé sermonized, she laughed; when he was angry at her, she kissed him vehemently, pressing him to her heart, while he would seek involuntarily to free himself from her embrace, though it made him taste a certain sweet joy, awaking deep within him that sensation of fatherhood which slumbers in every man.

Often he talked to her of God, of his God, walking beside her along the footpaths through the fields. She hardly listened, but looked at the sky, the grass, the flowers, with a joy of living which could be seen in her eyes. Sometimes she rushed forward to catch some flying creature, and, bringing it back, would cry: "Look, uncle, how pretty it is; I should like to kiss it." And this desire to "kiss flies" or bunches of lilac, worried, irritated, and revolted the priest, who saw, also in that, the ineradicable tenderness which ever springs in the hearts of women.

One day the sacristan's wife, who kept house for the Abbé Marignan, told him, very cautiously, that his niece had a lover!

He experienced a dreadful emotion, and stood choking, with the soap all over his face, for he was shaving.

When he found himself able to think and speak once more, he cried: "It is not true; you are lying, Mélanie!"

But the peasant woman placed her hand on her heart: "May our Lord judge me if I am lying, Monsieur le Curé. I tell you she goes to him every evening as soon as your sister is in bed. They meet each other beside the river. You have only to go there between ten o'clock and midnight, and see for yourself."

He ceased scraping his chin and began to pace the room rapidly, as he always did in his hours of serious meditation. When he tried to begin his shaving again, he cut himself three times from nose to ear.

All day long, he remained silent, filled with indignation and rage. To his priestly zeal against the mighty power of love was added the moral indignation of a father, of a teacher, of a keeper of souls, who has been deceived, robbed, outwitted by a child. He felt the egotistical sorrow that parents feel when their daughter announces that she has chosen a husband without them and in spite of their advice.

After his dinner, he tried to read a little, but he could not attune himself to it; and he grew more and more exasperated. When it struck ten, he

took his walking-stick, a formidable oaken club which he always carried when he had to go out at night to visit the sick. Smilingly he regarded the enormous cudgel, holding it in his strong, countryman's fist and cutting threatening circles with it in the air. Then, suddenly, he raised it, and grinding his teeth, he brought it down upon a chair, the back of which split in two, and fell to the ground.

He opened his door to go out; but he stopped upon the threshold, surprised by such a splendid moonlight as one seldom sees.

Endowed as he was with an exalted spirit, such a spirit as must have belonged to those dreamer-poets, the Fathers of the Church, he felt himself suddenly softened and moved by the grand and serene beauty of the pale night.

In his little garden, bathed in the soft brilliance, his fruit-trees, all in a row, were outlining upon the walk the shadows of their slender wooden limbs scarcely clothed with green; while the giant honeysuckle climbing up the wall of the house exhaled delicious breaths as sweet as sugar, which hovered through the warm, clear night like a perfumed soul.

He began to breathe deep, drinking in the air as drunkards drink their wine, and he walked slowly, delighted, surprised, almost forgetting his niece.

As he stepped into the open country he stopped to contemplate the whole plain, inundated by this caressing radiance, and drowned in the tender and languishing charm of the serene night. In chorus the frogs threw into the air their short, metallic notes, and to the seduction of the moonlight, distant

nightingales added that fitful music of theirs which brings no thoughts but dreams, that light and vibrant music which seems attuned to kisses.

The abbé continued his walk, his courage failing, he knew not why. He felt, as it were, enfeebled, and suddenly exhausted; he had a great desire to sit down, to stop there and contemplate and admire God in all His works.

Below him, following the twists of the little river, wound a great line of poplars. Around and above the banks, wrapping all the tortuous watercourse in a kind of light, transparent wadding, hung suspended a fine mist, a white vapour, which the moon-rays crossed, and silvered, and caused to gleam.

The priest paused again, penetrated to the depths of his soul by a strong and growing emotion. And a doubt, a vague uneasiness, seized on him; he felt that one of those questions he sometimes put to himself was now arising within him.

Why had God done this? Since the night is destined for sleep, for unconsciousness, for repose, for forgetfulness of everything, why, then, make it more charming than the day, sweeter than dawns and sunsets? And this slow, seductive star, more poetical than the sun, and so discreet that it seems designed to light up things too delicate, too mysterious, for the great luminary, — why had it come to brighten all the shades?

Why did not the sweetest of all songsters go to rest like the others? Why set himself to singing in the disturbing shadows? Why this half-veil over the world? Why these quiverings of the heart, this emotion of the soul, this languor of the body? Why

this display of seductions which mankind never sees, since men are asleep in their beds? For whom was this sublime spectacle intended, this flood of poetry poured from heaven to earth? The abbé did not understand it at all.

But then, down there along the edge of the pasture appeared two shadows walking side by side under the arched roof of the trees all soaked in glittering mist.

The man was the taller, and had his arm about his sweetheart's neck; from time to time he kissed her on the forehead. They suddenly animated the lifeless landscape, which enveloped them like a divine frame made expressly for them. They seemed, these two, a single being, the being for whom this calm and silent night was destined; and they approached the priest like a living answer, the answer vouchsafed by his Master to his question.

He stood stock-still, overwhelmed, and with a beating heart. He fancied he was witnessing some Bible story, such as the loves of Ruth and Boaz, the accomplishment of the will of the Lord in one of those great scenes talked of in holy writ. Through his head ran the verses of the Song of Songs, the ardent cries, the calls of the body, all the passionate poetry of that poem burning with tenderness and love. And he said to himself, "God perhaps has made such nights as this to clothe with ideals the loves of men."

He withdrew before the embracing couple, who went on arm in arm. And yet it was his niece; and now he wondered if he would not disobey the Lord.

For does not God permit love, since He surrounds it visibly with splendour such as this?

And he fled, in distraction, almost ashamed, as if he had penetrated into a temple where he had no right to enter.

A COUP D'ÉTAT

PARIS had just learnt of the disaster of Sedan. The Republic was proclaimed. All France was panting at the outset of a delirium that lasted until after the Commune. Everybody was playing soldiers from one end of the country to the other.

Hatters became colonels, assuming the duties of generals; revolvers and daggers were displayed on large rotund paunches, enveloped in red sashes; common citizens became temporary warriors, commanding battalions of noisy volunteers, and swearing like troopers to emphasize their importance.

The mere fact of bearing arms and handling guns excited people who hitherto had only handled weighing scales, and made them formidable to the first comer, without reason. They even executed a few innocent people to prove that they knew how to kill; and, in roaming through country places as yet innocent of Prussians, they shot stray dogs, cows chewing the cud in peace, or sick horses put out to pasture. Every man believed himself called upon to play a great rôle in military affairs. The cafés of the smallest villages, full of tradesmen in uniform, resembled barracks or field hospitals.

Now, the town of Canneville did not yet know the news of the army and the Capital, but a violent

agitation had been disturbing it for a month, and the rival parties had confronted each other. The mayor, Vicomte de Varnetot, a small, thin man, already old, a Legitimist who had rallied recently to the Empire, spurred by ambition, had seen rising up against him a powerful adversary in Doctor Massarel, a stout, full-blooded man, head of the Republican party in the district, venerable chief of the Masonic lodge in the county town, president of the Society of Agriculture, chairman of the Fire Department banquet, and organizer of the rural militia which was to save the country.

In two weeks he had induced sixty-three married men and fathers of families to volunteer in defence of their country, prudent farmers and merchants of the town, and he drilled them every morning on the square in front of the town hall.

Whenever the mayor happened to appear at the local government building, Commander Massarel, covered with pistols, sword in hand, passing proudly up and down in front of his troops, would make them shout, "Long live our country!" And this, they noticed, disturbed the little Vicomte, who no doubt heard in it menace and defiance, and perhaps some odious recollection of the great Revolution.

On the morning of the fifth of September, in uniform, his revolver on the table, the doctor was giving a consultation to an old peasant couple of whom the husband had suffered with varicose veins for seven years, but who had waited until his wife had the same complaint before coming to see the doctor, when the postman arrived with the newspaper.

Doctor Massarel opened it, grew pale, straightened

himself abruptly and, raising his arms to heaven in a gesture of exaltation, cried out with all his might, in the face of the amazed rustics:

"Long live the Republic! Long live the Republic! Long live the Republic!"

Then he dropped into his armchair weak with emotion.

When the peasant explained again that this sickness had begun with a feeling as if ants were running up and down in his legs, the doctor exclaimed: "Leave me in peace. I have no time to waste on such nonsense. The Republic is proclaimed! The Emperor is a prisoner! France is saved! Long live the Republic!" And, running to the door, he bellowed: "Céleste! Quick! Céleste!"

The frightened maid hastened in. He stuttered, so rapidly did he try to speak: "My boots, my sword—my cartridge box — and — the Spanish dagger, which is on my night table. Hurry now!"

The obstinate peasant, taking advantage of the moment's silence, began again: "They became like knots that hurt me when I walked."

The exasperated doctor shouted: "Shut up, for heaven's sake! If you had washed your feet oftener, it would not have happened." Then, seizing him by the neck, he hissed in his face: "Can't you understand that we are living in a Republic, idiot?"

But a sense of his profession calmed him suddenly, and he let the astonished old couple out of the house, repeating:

"Come back to-morrow, come back to-morrow, my friends; I have no time to-day."

While equipping himself from head to foot, ne gave another series of urgent orders to the maid:

"Run to Lieutenant Picart's and to Sub-lieutenant Pommel's and tell them that I want them here immediately. Send Torchebeuf to me, too, with his drum. Quick, now! Quick!" And when Céleste was gone, he collected his thoughts and prepared to overcome the difficulties of the situation.

The three men arrived together. They were in their working clothes. The Commander, who had expected to see them in uniform, gave a start of surprise.

"Good Lord! You know nothing, then? The Emperor has been taken prisoner. A Republic is proclaimed. We must take action. My position is delicate, I might almost say perilous."

He reflected for some minutes in the presence of his astonished subordinates and then continued:

"We must act without hesitation. Minutes now are worth hours in times like these. Everything depends upon promptness of decision. You, Picart, go and find the priest and order him to ring the bell to bring the people together, so that I can inform them. You, Torchebeuf, beat the call in every part of the district, as far as the hamlets of Gerisaie and Salmare, to assemble the militia in arms, in the square. You, Pommel, put on your uniform at once, that is, the jacket and cap. We, together, are going to take possession of the town hall and summon M. de Varnetot to transfer his authority to me. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Act, then, and promptly. I will accompany you

to your house, Pommel, since we are to work together."

Five minutes later, the Commandant and his subaltern, armed to the teeth, appeared in the square, just at the moment when the little Vicomte de Varnetot, wearing hunting gaiters, and with his rifle on his shoulder, came along by another street, walking rapidly and followed by three gamekeepers in green jackets, each carrying a knife at his side and a gun over his shoulder.

While the doctor stopped in amazement, the four men entered the town hall and the door closed behind them.

"We have been forestalled," murmured the doctor. "Now we shall have to wait for re-enforcements; nothing can be done for the time being."

Lieutenant Picart re-appeared: "The priest refuses to obey," said he; "he has even shut himself up in the church with the beadle and the usher."

On the other side of the square, opposite the white, closed front of the town-hall, the church, silent and sombre, showed its great oak door with the wrought-iron trimmings.

Then, as the puzzled inhabitants put their heads out of the windows, or came out upon their thresholds, the rolling of a drum was heard, and Torchebeuf suddenly appeared, beating with fury the three quick strokes of the call to arms. He crossed the square with disciplined step, and then disappeared along the road leading to the country.

The Commandant drew his sword, advanced alone about half way between the two buildings where the enemy was barricaded and, waving his weapon

above his head, roared at the top of his lungs: "Long live the Republic! Death to traitors!" Then he fell back where his officers were. The butcher, the baker, and the apothecary, feeling a little uncertain, put up their shutters and closed their shops. The grocery alone remained open.

Meanwhile the men of the militia were gradually arriving, variously clothed, but all wearing caps with red braid, the cap constituting the whole uniform of the corps. They were armed with their old, rusty guns, guns that had hung over chimney-pieces in kitchens for thirty years, and looked quite like a detachment of foresters.

When there were about thirty around him, the Commandant explained in a few words the state of affairs. Then, turning toward his general staff, he said: "Now, we must act."

While the inhabitants collected, looked on, and discussed the matter, the doctor quickly formed his plan of campaign:

"Lieutenant Picart, you advance to the windows of the town hall and order M. de Varnetot to surrender it to me, in the name of the Republic."

But the lieutenant was a master-mason and refused.

"You are very clever, aren't you? Trying to make a target of me! Those fellows in there are good shots, you know. No, thanks! Execute your commissions yourself!"

The Commandant turned red: "I order you to go in the name of discipline," said he.

The lieutenant rebelled:

"I am not going to have my features spoiled without knowing the reason why."

The notables of the village, in a group near by, began to laugh. One of them called out: "You are right, Picart, it is not the proper time." The doctor, under his breath, muttered: "Cowards!" And, placing his sword and his revolver in the hands of a soldier, he advanced with measured step, his eyes fixed on the windows, as if he expected to see the muzzle of a gun pointed at him.

When he was within a few steps of the building the doors at the two ends, affording an entrance to two schools, opened, and a flood of little creatures, boys on one side, girls on the other, poured out and began playing in the open space, chattering around the doctor like a flock of birds. He could hardly make himself heard.

As soon as they were all out, the two doors closed. The greater part of the little monkeys finally scattered, and then the Commandant called out in a loud voice:

"Monsieur de Varnetot?" A window in the first story opened and M. de Varnetot appeared.

The Commandant began: "Monsieur, you are aware of the great events which have changed the system of Government. The party you represent no longer exists. The side I represent now comes into power. Under these sad but decisive circumstances, I come to summon you, in the name of the new Republic, to place in my hands the authority vested in you by the out-going power."

M. de Varnetot replied: "Doctor Massarel, I am mayor of Canneville, so placed by the proper author-

ities, and mayor of Canneville I shall remain until the title is revoked and replaced by an order from my superiors. As mayor, I am at home in the town hall and there I shall stay. Furthermore, just try to put me out." And he closed the window.

The Commandant returned to his troops. But, before explaining anything, measuring Lieutenant Picart from head to foot, he said:

"You are a fine fellow, you are, — a goose, the disgrace of the army. I degrade you."

The Lieutenant replied: "I don't care a damn." And he went over to the group of grumbling citizens.

Then the doctor hesitated. What should he do? Make an assault? Would his men obey him? And then, was he in the right? Then he had a bright idea. He ran to the telegraph office opposite the town hall, on the other side of the square, and sent three dispatches: "To the Members of the Republican Government, at Paris"; "To the New Republican Prefect of the Seine-Inférieure, at Rouen"; "To the New Republican Sub-Prefect of Dieppe."

He explained the situation fully; told of the danger which the district incurred by remaining in the hands of the monarchist mayor, offered his loyal services, asked for orders and signed his name, followed by all his titles. Then he returned to his army corps and, drawing ten francs out of his pocket, said:

"Now, my men, go and eat and drink a little something. Only leave here a detachment of ten men, so that no one leaves the town hall."

Ex-Lieutenant Picart, chatting with the watch-

maker, overheard this. With a sneer he remarked: "Pardon me, but if they go out, you will have a chance to go in. Otherwise, I can't see how you are to get in there!"

The doctor made no reply, but went off to lunch. In the afternoon, he placed guards all about town, as if it were threatened by a surprise. Many times he passed before the doors of the town hall and of the church, without noticing anything suspicious; one might have believed the two buildings were empty.

The butcher, the baker, and the apothecary reopened their shops. There was a lot of talking in the houses. If the Emperor had been taken prisoner, there must be a traitor somewhere. They did not know exactly which Republic had been restored.

Night came on. Toward nine o'clock, the doctor returned quietly and alone to the entrance to the town hall, persuaded that his adversary had retired. And, as he was trying to force an entrance with a few blows of a pickaxe, the loud voice of a sentry demanded suddenly: "Who goes there?" Monsieur Massarel beat a retreat at top speed.

Another day dawned without any change in the situation. The militia in arms occupied the square. The inhabitants stood around them, awaiting the solution. People from neighbouring villages came to look on. Finally, the doctor, realizing that his reputation was at stake, resolved to settle the thing in one way or another. He had just decided that it must be something energetic, when the door of the telegraph office opened and the little servant of the postmistress appeared, holding in her hand two papers.

First she went to the Commandant and gave him one of the dispatches; then, crossing the deserted centre of the square, intimidated by so many eyes fixed upon her, with lowered head and running steps, she rapped gently at the door of the barricaded house, as if unaware that a party of men in arms was concealed there.

The door opened slightly; the hand of a man received the message, and the girl returned, blushing and ready to weep, from being stared at by the whole countryside.

In vibrating tones the doctor shouted: "Silence, please." And, when the populace became quiet, he continued proudly:

"Here is a communication which I have received from the Government." And raising the telegram, he read:

"Old mayor recalled. Please attend to urgent matters. Instructions will follow.

"For the Sub-Prefect,
"SAPIN, Councillor."

He had triumphed. His heart was beating with joy. His hands were shaking. But Picart, his old subaltern, cried out to him from a neighbouring group: "That's all right; but if the others in there won't get out, that piece of paper will not do you much good." M. Massarel turned pale. Supposing the others would not get out? He would now have to take the offensive. It was not only his right, but his duty. And he looked anxiously at the town hall, hoping that he might see the door open and his adversary retreat. But the door remained

closed. What was to be done? The crowd was increasing, surrounding the militia. People were laughing.

One thought, especially, tortured the doctor. If he should make an assault, he must march at the head of his men; and as, once he were killed, there would be no opposition, it would be at him, and at him alone that M. de Varnetot and the three gamekeepers would aim. And their aim was good, very good! Picart had reminded him of that.

But an idea occurred to him, and turning to Pommel, he said: "Go, quickly, and ask the chemist to lend me a napkin and a pole."

The Lieutenant hurried off. The doctor was going to make a political banner, a white one, that would, perhaps, rejoice the Legitimist heart of the old mayor.

Pommel returned with the piece of linen required, and a broom handle. With some pieces of string, they improvised a flag, which Massarel seized in both hands. Again, he advanced towards the town hall, bearing the standard before him. When in front of the door, he called out: "Monsieur de Varnetot!"

The door opened suddenly, and M. de Varnetot and his three gamekeepers appeared on the threshold. The doctor recoiled, instinctively. Then, he saluted his enemy courteously, and announced, almost strangled by emotion: "I have come, sir, to communicate to you the instructions I have just received."

That gentleman, without any salutation whatever, replied: "I am going to withdraw, sir, but you must

understand that it is not because of fear, or in obedience to an odious government that has usurped power." And, biting off each word, he declared: "I do not wish to have the appearance of serving the Republic for a single day. That is all."

Massarel, amazed, made no reply; and M. de Varnetot, walking off at a rapid pace, disappeared around the corner, followed closely by his escort. Then the doctor, mad with pride, returned to the crowd. When he was near enough to be heard, he cried: "Hurrah! Hurrah! The Republic triumphs all along the line!"

But no emotion was manifested. The doctor tried again: "The people are free! You are free and independent! Do you understand? Be proud of it!"

The listless villagers looked at him with eyes unlit by glory. In his turn, he looked at them, indignant at their indifference, seeking for some word that could make a grand impression, electrify this placid country and make good his mission. The inspiration came, and turning to Pommel, he said: "Lieutenant, go and get the bust of the ex-Emperor, which is in the Municipal Council Hall, and bring it to me with a chair."

And soon the man reappeared, carrying on his right shoulder, Napoleon III. in plaster, and holding in his left hand a straw-bottomed chair.

Massarel met him, took the chair, placed it on the ground, put the white image upon it, fell back a few steps and called out, in sonorous voice:

"Tyrant! Tyrant! At last you have fallen! Fallen in the dust and in the mire. An expiring country groaned beneath your foot. Avenging fate

has struck you down. Defeat and shame cling to you. You fall conquered, a prisoner to the Prussians, and upon the ruins of the crumbling Empire the young and radiant Republic arises, picking up your broken sword."

He awaited applause. But not a shout was raised, not a hand clapped. The bewildered peasants remained silent. And the bust, with its pointed moustaches extending beyond the cheeks on each side, the bust, as motionless and well groomed as a hairdresser's sign, seemed to be looking at M. Massarel with a plaster smile, an ineffaceable and mocking smile.

They remained thus face to face, Napoleon on the chair, the doctor in front of him about three steps away. Suddenly the Commandant grew angry. What was to be done? What was there that would move these people, and bring about a definite victory of opinion? His hand happened to rest on his hip and to come in contact there with the butt end of his revolver, under his red sash. No inspiration, no further word would come. So he drew his pistol, advanced two steps, and, taking aim, fired at the late monarch. The ball entered the forehead, leaving a little, black hole, like a spot, nothing more. It made no effect. Then he fired a second shot, which made a second hole; then, a third; and then, without stopping, he emptied his revolver. The brow of Napoleon disappeared in white powder, but the eyes, the nose, and the fine points of the moustaches remained intact. Then, the exasperated doctor overturned the chair with a blow of his fist and, resting a foot on the remainder

of the bust in an attitude of triumph, he turned to the flabbergasted public and shouted: "So let all tyrants perish!"

Still no enthusiasm was manifest, and as the spectators seemed to be in a kind of stupor from astonishment, the Commandant called to the militiamen: "You may now go to your homes." And he went toward his own house with great strides, as if he were pursued.

His maid, when he appeared, told him that some patients had been waiting in his office for three hours. He hastened in. There were the two varicose-vein patients, who had returned at daybreak, obstinate and patient.

The old man immediately began his explanation: "This began by a feeling like ants running up and down my legs."

MOIRON

AS THEY were still speaking of Pranzini, M. Maloureau, who had been Attorney-General under the Empire, said:

"I once knew a very curious affair, curious from many points of view, as you will see.

"I was at that time Public Prosecutor in the provinces, and stood very well at Court, thanks to my father, who was first President at Paris. I had charge of a case which has remained famous, called 'The Affair of Schoolmaster Moiron.'

"M. Moiron, a schoolmaster in the north of France, bore an excellent reputation in all the countryside. He was an intelligent, thoughtful, very religious man, rather silent, and had married in the district of Boislinot, where he practised his profession. He had had three children, who all died, one after the other, from consumption. After the loss of his own little ones, he seemed to lavish upon the urchins confided to his care all the tenderness concealed in his heart. He bought, with his own money, playthings for his best pupils, for the best behaved and the nicest. He allowed them to have play dinners, and gorged them with dainties, sweetmeats and cakes. Everybody loved and praised this good man and his tender heart, when five of his pupils suddenly died of a very mysterious disease.

It was believed that an epidemic prevailed, caused by the water being made impure from drought. They looked for the cause, without discovering it, the more so, because the symptoms were very strange. The children appeared to be taken with a languor, could eat nothing, complained of pains in the stomach, and finally died in most terrible agony.

"An autopsy was made of the last victim, but nothing was discovered. The entrails were sent to Paris and analysed, but showed no sign of any toxic substance.

"For one year no further deaths occurred; then two little boys, the best pupils in the class, favourites of old Moiron, expired in four days' time. An examination was ordered, and in each body fragments of pounded glass were found imbedded in the organs. They concluded that the two children had eaten imprudently of something carelessly prepared. The breaking of a glass over a bowl of milk would have been enough to cause this frightful accident, and the matter would have rested there had not Moiron's servant been taken ill just at that time. The physician found the same morbid signs that he observed in the preceding attacks of the children, and, upon questioning her, finally obtained the confession that she had stolen and eaten some sweets, bought by the master for his pupils.

"Upon order of the court, the schoolhouse was searched and a closet was found, full of toys and sweets for the children. Nearly all these edibles contained fragments of glass or broken needles.

"Moiron, who was immediately arrested, appeared

so indignant and horrified at being suspected that he was nearly released. Nevertheless, the indications of his guilt were so apparent that they fought hard in my mind against my first conviction, which was based upon his good reputation, his entire record, and the absolute absence, the incredibility, of any motive for such a crime.

"Why should this good, simple, religious man kill children, and the children whom he seemed to love best? Why should he select those he had feasted with dainties, for whom he had spent in playthings and sweets half his stipend?

"To admit this, one would have to conclude that he was insane. But Moiron seemed so reasonable, so calm, so full of judgment and good sense! It was impossible to prove insanity in him.

"Proofs accumulated, nevertheless! Sweets, cakes, marshmallows, and other things seized at the shops where the schoolmaster got his supplies, were found to contain nothing suspicious.

"He pretended that some unknown enemy had opened his closet with a false key and placed the glass and needles in the sweets. And he invented a whole story about a legacy dependent on the death of a child, sought out and discovered by a peasant, and so worked up as to make the suspicion fall upon the schoolmaster. This brute, he said, was not interested in the other poor children who were also condemned to die.

"This was plausible. The man appeared so sure of himself and so sorry, that we should have acquitted him without doubt, if two overwhelming discoveries had not been made, one after the other. The first

was a snuff-box full of ground glass! It was his own snuff-box, in a secret drawer of his writing desk, where he kept his money.

"He explained this in a manner almost acceptable, by saying that it was the final ruse of the unknown culprit. But a draper from Saint-Marlouf presented himself at the house of the judge, and told him that Moiron had bought needles of him many times, the finest needles he could find, breaking them to see whether they suited him.

"The draper brought as witnesses a dozen persons who recognized Moiron at first glance. And the inquiry revealed the fact that the schoolmaster was at Saint-Marlouf on the days mentioned by the merchant.

"I pass over the terrible evidence of the children as to the master's choice of dainties, and his care in making the little ones eat in his presence and destroying all traces of the feast.

"Outraged public opinion demanded capital punishment, and took on a new force from exaggerated terror, which allows of no delays or resistance.

"Moiron was condemned to death. His appeal was rejected. No recourse remained to him for pardon. I knew from my father that the Emperor would not grant it.

"One morning, as I was at work in my office, the chaplain of the prison was announced. He was an old priest who had a great knowledge of men and a large acquaintance among criminals. He appeared worried, constrained, and uneasy. After talking a few moments of other things, he said abruptly, on rising:

"'If Moiron is decapitated, you will have allowed the execution of an innocent man.'

"Then, without bowing, he went out, leaving me under the profound effect of his words. He had pronounced them in a solemn, moving fashion, opening lips, closed and sealed by the secret of the confessional, in order to save a life.

"An hour later I was on my way to Paris, and my father, at my request, asked for an immediate audience with the Emperor.

"I was received the next day. Napoleon III. was at work in a little room when we were introduced. I explained the whole affair, even to the visit of the priest, and, in the midst of the story, the door opened behind the chair of the Emperor, and the Empress, believing him to be alone, entered. His Majesty consulted her. As soon as she heard the facts, she exclaimed:

"'This man must be pardoned! He must, because he is innocent.'

"Why should this sudden conviction of a woman so pious throw into my mind a terrible doubt?

"Up to that time I had ardently desired a commutation of the sentence. And now I felt myself the puppet, the dupe of an adroit criminal, who had used the priest and the confessional as a means of defence.

"I showed some hesitation to their Majesties. The Emperor remained undecided, torn on one hand by his natural goodness, and on the other held back by the fear of allowing himself to be made a fool of by a scoundrel; but the Empress, convinced that the priest had obeyed a divine call, repeated:

'What does it matter? It is better to spare a guilty man than to kill an innocent one.' Her advice prevailed. The penalty of death was commuted, and that of hard labour was substituted.

"Some years after I heard that Moiron, whose exemplary conduct at Toulon had been made known again to the Emperor, was employed as a servant by the director of the penitentiary. And then I heard no word of this man for a long time.

"About two years after this, when I was passing the summer at Lille, in the house of my cousin, de Larielle, I was told, one evening, as we were sitting down to dinner, that a young priest wished to speak to me.

"I told them to let him come in, and he begged me to go with him to a dying man, who desired, above all things, to see me. This had happened often, during my long career as judge, and, although I had been put aside by the Republic, I was still called upon from time to time in like circumstances.

"I followed the priest, who took me to a little miserable lodging, under the roof of a lofty workmen's tenement. There, upon a pallet of straw, I found a dying man, seated with his back against the wall, in order to breathe. He was a sort of grimacing skeleton, with deep, shining eyes.

"When he saw me he murmured: 'You do not know me?'

"'No.'

"'I am Moiron.'

"I shivered, but said: 'The schoolmaster?'

"'Yes.'

"'How is it you are here?'

"'That would take too long — I haven't time — I am going to die — They brought me this priest — and as I knew you were here, I sent him for you — It is to you that I wish to confess — since you saved my life long ago.'

"He seized with his dry hands the straw of his bed, and continued, in a rasping, bass voice:

"'There . . . I owe you the truth — to you, because it is necessary to tell it to some one before leaving the earth.

"'It was I who killed the children — all — it was I — for vengeance!

"'Listen. I was an honest man, very honest — very honest — very pure — adoring God — the good God — the God that they teach us to love, and not the false God, the executioner, the robber, the murderer who governs the earth — I had never done wrong, never committed a villainous act. I was pure as one unborn.

"'After I was married I had children, and I began to love them as never father or mother loved their own. I lived only for them. I was foolish. They died, all three of them! Why? Why? What had I done? I? I had a change of heart, a furious change. Suddenly I opened my eyes as though waking from a dream, and I saw that God is wicked. Why had He killed my children? I opened my eyes and I saw that He loved to kill. He loves only that, Monsieur. He gives life only to take it away! God is a murderer! Some death is necessary to Him every day. He causes death in many ways, the better to amuse Himself. He has invented sickness and accident in order to divert Himself through

all the long months and years, and, when He is weary, He has epidemics, plague, cholera, diphtheria, smallpox; and I know not what else this monster has invented.

"'All that was not enough. All those evils are too much alike. From time to time He sends war, in order to see two hundred thousand soldiers laid low, bruised in blood and mire, with arms and legs torn off, heads broken by bullets, like eggs that fall along the road.

"'That is not all. He has made men who eat one another. And then, as men become better than He, He has made beasts to see the men chase them, slaughter, and eat them. That is not all. He has made all the little animals that live for a day, flies which increase by myriads in an hour, ants, that one crushes, and others, many, so many that we cannot even imagine them. And all kill one another, chase one another, devour one another, and constantly die. And the good God looks on and is amused, because He sees everything, the largest as well as the smallest, those which are in drops of water, as well as those in the stars. He looks at them all and is amused! Ugh! Beast!

"'So, I, Monsieur, I also have killed some children. I played this trick on Him. It was not He who got them. It was not He, it was I. And I would have killed still more, but you took me away. That's all!

"'I was going to die, guillotined. I! How He would have laughed, the reptile! Then I asked for a priest, and lied to him. I confessed. I lied, and I lived.

"'Now it is all over. I can no longer escape

Him. But I have no fear of Him, Monsieur, I despise Him too much.'

"It was frightful to see this miserable creature, hardly able to breathe, talking in gasps, opening an enormous mouth to eject words that were barely audible, pulling up the cloth of his straw bed, and, under a blanket that was nearly black, moving his thin legs, as if to run away.

"Oh! the awful creature, and the awful remembrance!

"I said: 'Have you nothing more to say?'

"'No, Monsieur.'

"'Then, farewell.'

"'Farewell, sir. Some day . . .'

"I turned toward the priest, who was livid, and whose sombre silhouette was thrown upon the wall.

"'You will remain?'

"'I will remain.'

"Then the dying man sneered: 'Yes, yes, he sends crows to dead bodies.'

"As for me, I had had enough of it. I opened the door and ran away."

QUEEN HORTENSE

THEY called her Queen Hortense in Argenteuil. No one ever knew why. Perhaps because she spoke firmly, like an officer giving orders. Perhaps because she was large, bony, and imperious. Perhaps because she governed a multitude of domestic animals, hens, dogs, cats, canaries, and parrots, — those animals so dear to old maids. But she neither spoiled these familiar subjects, nor addressed them with loving words, those tender puerilities which seem to slip from the lips of a woman to the velvety coat of a purring cat. She governed her beasts with authority. She ruled.

She was an old maid, one of those old maids with harsh voice, and awkward gesture, whose soul seems hard. She had always had young servants, because youth more easily adapts itself to strong wills. She never allowed contradiction from any person, nor argument, nor would she tolerate hesitation, or indifference, or idleness, or fatigue. No one ever heard her complain, or regret what was, or envy others. "To each one his share," she would say, with fatalistic conviction. She never went to church, cared nothing for the priests, scarcely believed in God, and called all religious things "stuff for mourners."

For thirty years she had lived in her little house,

with its tiny garden in front, extending along the street, never modifying her way of living, changing only her maids, and that mercilessly, when they became twenty-one years old.

She replaced, without tears and without regrets, her dogs or cats or birds, when they died of old age, or by accident, and she buried the dead animals in a flower-bed, heaping the earth above them with a small spade and treading it down with perfect indifference.

She had in the town a few acquaintances, the families of clerks, whose men travelled to Paris every day. From time to time, they would invite her to spend the evening and drink a cup of tea with them. She inevitably fell asleep on these occasions, and they were obliged to wake her up so that she could go home. She never allowed any one to accompany her, having no fear by night or day. She seemed to have no love for children.

She occupied her time with a thousand masculine cares, carpentry, gardening, cutting or sawing wood, repairing her old house, even doing mason's work when it was necessary.

She had some relatives who came to see her twice a year. Her two sisters, Madame Cimme and Madame Columbel, were married, one to an herbalist, the other to a man with small private means. Madame Cimme had no children; Madame Columbel had three: Henri, Pauline, and Joseph. Henri was twenty-one, Pauline, seventeen, and Joseph only three, having come when one would have thought the mother past the age. No tenderness united this old maid to her kinsfolk.

In the spring of 1882, Queen Hortense became suddenly ill. The neighbours went for a doctor, whom she drove away. When the priest presented himself she got out of bed, half naked, and put him out. The little maid, weeping, made herb tea for her.

After three days in bed, the situation became so grave that the carpenter living next door, on the advice of the doctor, who had returned to the house on his own authority, took it upon himself to summon the two families.

They arrived by the same train, about ten o'clock in the morning; the Columbels having brought their little Joseph.

When they arrived at the garden gate, they saw the maid seated on a chair against the wall, weeping. The dog lay asleep on the mat before the front door, under a broiling sun; two cats, that looked dead, lay stretched out on the window-sills, with eyes closed and paws and tails extended at full length. A great clucking hen was promenading before the door, at the head of a flock of chicks covered with yellow down, and in a large cage hung against the wall, covered with chickweed, were several birds, singing themselves hoarse in the light of this hot spring morning.

Two others, inseparable, in a little cage in the form of a cottage, remained quiet, side by side on their perch.

M. Cimme, a large, wheezy personage, who always entered a room first, pushing aside men and women when it was necessary, remarked to the maid: "Well, Céleste! Is it so bad as that?"

The little maid sobbed through her tears:

"She doesn't know me any more. The doctor says it is the end."

They all looked at one another.

Madame Cimme and Madame Columbel embraced each other instantly, without saying a word.

They resembled each other very much, always wearing their hair parted in the middle, and shawls of red cashmere, as bright as hot coals.

Cimme turned toward his brother-in-law, a pale man, yellow and thin, tormented by indigestion, who limped badly, and said to him in a serious tone:

"Gad! It was time!"

But no one dared to go into the room of the dying woman, situated on the ground floor. Cimme himself let the others go before him. Columbel was the first to make up his mind; he entered, balancing himself like the mast of a ship, making a noise on the floor with the ferrule of his walking-stick.

The two women ventured to follow, and M. Cimme brought up the line.

Little Joseph remained outside, drawn by the sight of the dog.

A ray of sunlight fell on the bed, just lighting up the hands which moved nervously, opening and shutting without ceasing. The fingers moved as if a thought animated them, as if they would signify something, indicate some idea, obey some intelligence. The rest of the body remained motionless under the sheet. The angular figure gave no start. The eyes remained closed.

The relatives arranged themselves in a semi-circle and, without saying a word, watched the heaving

breast and the short breathing. The little maid had followed them, still shedding tears.

Finally, Cimme asked: "What did the doctor say exactly?"

The servant stammered: "He said we must leave her alone, that nothing more could be done."

Suddenly the lips of the old maid began to move. She seemed to pronounce some silent words, concealed in her dying brain, and her hands quickened their singular movement.

Then she spoke in a little, thin voice, quite unlike her own, a voice that seemed to come from far off, perhaps from the bottom of that heart always closed.

Cimme walked upon tiptoe, finding this spectacle painful. Columbel, whose lame leg was growing tired, sat down.

The two women remained standing.

Queen Hortense muttered something quickly, which they were unable to understand. She pronounced some names, called tenderly some imaginary persons:

"Come here, my little Philippe, kiss your mother. You love mamma, don't you, my child? You, Rose, you will watch your little sister while I am out. Above all, don't leave her alone, do you hear? And I forbid you to touch matches."

She was silent some seconds; then, in a loud tone, as if she was calling, she said: "Henriette!" She waited a little and continued: "Tell your father to come and speak to me before going to his office." Then suddenly: "I am not very well to-day, dear; promise me you will not return late; you will tell

your chief that I am ill. You know it is dangerous to leave the children alone when I am in bed. I am going to make you a dish of rice and sugar for dinner. The little ones like it so much. Claire will be so pleased!"

She began to laugh, a youthful and noisy laugh, as she had never laughed before. "Look at Jean," she said, "how funny he looks. He has smeared himself with jam, the dirty little thing! Look! my dear, how funny he looks!"

Columbel, who kept changing the position of his lame leg every moment, murmured: "She is dreaming that she has children and a husband; the end is near."

The two sisters did not move, but seemed surprised and stunned.

The little maid said: "Will you take off your hats and your shawls, and go into the other room?"

They went out without having said a word. And Columbel followed them limping, leaving the dying woman alone again.

When they were relieved of their outer garments, the women seated themselves. Then one of the cats left the window, stretched herself, jumped into the room, then upon the knees of Madame Cimme, who began to caress her.

They heard from the next room the voice of the dying woman, living, without doubt, in this last hour, the life she had wished for, pouring out her dreams at the very moment when all would be finished for her.

Cimme, in the garden, played with little Joseph and the dog, enjoying himself, with all the gaiety of

a fat man in the country, without a thought for the dying woman.

But suddenly he entered, and addressed the maid: "I say, my girl, are you going to give us some lunch? What are you going to eat, ladies?"

They decided upon an omelet of fine herbs, a piece of fillet with new potatoes, cheese, and a cup of coffee.

And as Madame Columbel was fumbling in her pocket for her purse Cimme stopped her, and turning to the maid said, "You must have some money?" and she answered: "Yes, sir."

"How much?"

"Fifteen francs."

"That's enough. Make haste, now, my girl, because I am getting hungry."

Madame Cimme, looking out at the climbing flowers bathed in the sunlight, and at two pigeons making love on the roof opposite, said, with a heart-broken air: "It is unfortunate to have come for so sad an event. It would be nice in the country, to-day."

Her sister sighed without answering, and Columbel murmured, moved perhaps by the thought of a walk:

"My leg plagues me awfully."

Little Joseph and the dog made a terrible noise, one shouting with joy and the other barking violently. They played at hide-and-seek around the three flower-beds, running after each other like mad.

The dying woman continued to call her children, chatting with each, imagining that she was dressing them, that she caressed them, that she was teaching

them to read: "Come, Simon, repeat, A, B, C, D. You do not say it well; see, D, D, D, do you hear? Repeat, now . . ."

Cimme declared: "It is extraordinary the things one talks about at such times."

Then said Madame Columbel: "It would be better, perhaps, to go in there."

But Cimme dissuaded her from it:

"Why go in, since we are not able to do anything for her? Besides we are as well off here."

No one insisted. Madame observed the two green birds called inseparable. She remarked pleasantly upon this singular fidelity, and blamed men for not imitating these little creatures. Cimme looked at his wife and laughed, singing with a bantering air, "Tra-la-la, Tra-la-la," as if to say he could tell some things about his own fidelity.

Columbel, taken with cramps in his stomach, struck the floor with his cane. The other cat entered, its tail in the air. They did not sit down at table until one o'clock.

When he had tasted the wine, Columbel, who could drink only choice Bordeaux, called the servant:

"I say, is there nothing better than this in the cellar?"

"Yes, sir; there is some of the wine that was served when you used to come here."

"Oh, well, go and bring three bottles."

They tasted this wine, which seemed excellent. Not that it was of a remarkable vintage, but it had been fifteen years in the cellar. Cimme declared it was real wine for invalids.

Columbel, seized with a desire to possess this Bor-

deaux, asked of the maid: "How much is left of it, my girl?"

"Oh, nearly all, sir; Mademoiselle never drank any of it. It is at the bottom of the cellar."

Then Columbel turned toward his brother-in-law: "If you wish, Cimme, I will take this wine in exchange for something else; it agrees with my stomach wonderfully."

The hen, in her turn, had entered with her troop of chicks; the two women amused themselves by throwing crumbs to them. Joseph and the dog were sent back into the garden, as they had eaten enough.

Queen Hortense spoke continually, but in a whisper now, so that it was no longer possible to distinguish the words.

When they had finished the coffee, they all went in to learn the condition of the sick woman. She seemed calm.

They went out and seated themselves in a circle in the garden, to digest their food.

Presently the dog began to run around the chairs with all speed, carrying something in his mouth. The child ran wildly after him. Both disappeared into the house. Cimme fell asleep, with his stomach in the sun.

The dying woman began to speak loudly again. Then suddenly she shouted.

The two women and Columbel hastened in to see what had happened. Cimme awakened but did not move, as he did not care for such things.

The dying woman was sitting up, staring with haggard eyes. Her dog, to escape the pursuit of lit-

tle Joseph, had jumped upon the bed, and across the dying woman. Intrenched behind the pillow, he was peeping at his comrade with eyes glistening, ready to jump again at the least movement. He held in his mouth one of the slippers of his mistress, all torn by his teeth, as he had been playing with it for an hour.

The child, intimidated by the woman rising so suddenly before him, stood motionless before the bed.

The hen, which had also entered, had jumped upon a chair, frightened by the noise, and was desperately calling to her chicks, which were peeping, frightened, from under the four legs of the chair.

Queen Hortense cried out in piercing tones: "No, no, I do not wish to die! I don't want to! Who will bring up my children? Who will care for them? Who will love them? No I won't! . . . I am not . . ."

She fell back. All was over.

The dog, much excited, jumped into the room and skipped about.

Columbel ran to the window and called his brother-in-law: "Come quickly! come quickly! I believe she is gone."

Then Cimme got up and resolutely went into the room, muttering: "It did not take so long as I thought it would."

THE CHILD

AFTER swearing for a long time that he would never marry, Jacques Bourdillère suddenly changed his mind. It happened one summer at the seaside, quite unexpectedly.

One morning, as he was stretched on the sand, watching the women come out of the water, a little foot caught his attention, because of its slimness and delicacy. As he raised his eyes higher, the entire person seemed attractive. Of this entire person he had, however, seen only the ankles and the head emerging from a white flannel bathrobe, fastened with care. He was called sensual and dissipated, and it was by grace of form alone that he was first captured. Afterwards he was held by the charm and sweet spirit of the young girl, who was simple and good and fresh, like her cheeks and her lips.

When he was introduced to the family, they liked him and soon he was head over heels in love. When he saw Berthe Lannis at a distance, on the long stretch of yellow sand, he trembled from head to foot. Near her he was dumb, incapable of saying anything or even of thinking, with a kind of bubbling in his heart, a humming in his ears, and a frightened feeling in his mind. Was this love?

He did not know, he did not understand it, but he was fully decided to make this child his wife.

Her parents hesitated a long time, deterred by the bad reputation of the young man. He had a mistress, it was said, — an old mistress, an old and strong entanglement, one of those chains which is believed to be broken, but which continues to hold, nevertheless. In addition, he had loved, for longer or shorter periods, every woman who had come within reach of his lips.

But he turned over a new leaf, and would not even consent to see once more the woman with whom he had lived so long. A friend arranged her pension, assuring her a livelihood. Jacques paid, but he did not wish to hear her name mentioned, pretending henceforth that he did not even know who she was. She wrote letters which he would not open. Every week he recognized the clumsy handwriting of the woman he had abandoned, and every week a greater anger arose in him against her, and he would tear the envelope in two, without opening it, without reading a line, knowing beforehand the reproaches and complaints it would contain.

As there was but little belief in his perseverance, he was put to the test during the whole winter, and it was not until the spring that his suit was accepted.

The marriage took place in Paris during the early part of May. It was decided that they should not go on the usual honeymoon. After a little ball, a dance for her young cousins, which would not last beyond eleven o'clock, and would not prolong for ever the fatigue of that day of ceremonies, the young couple intended to pass their first night at the family home and to set out the next morning for the seaside, where they had met and loved.

The night came, and people were dancing in the big drawing-room. The newly-married pair had withdrawn into a little Japanese boudoir with bright silk hangings, and scarcely lighted this evening, except by the dim rays from a coloured lantern in the shape of an enormous egg, which hung from the ceiling. The long window was open, allowing at times a fresh breath of air from without to blow upon their faces, for the evening was soft and warm, full of the odour of springtime.

They said nothing, but held each other's hands, pressing them from time to time with all their force. She was a little dazed by this great change in her life; her eyes were dreaming. She was smiling, deeply moved, ready to weep, often ready to swoon from joy, believing the entire world changed because of what had come to her, a little disturbed without knowing the reason why, and feeling all her body, all her soul, enveloped in an indefinable, delightful lassitude.

He watched her all the time, smiling with a fixed smile. He wished to talk but found nothing to say, and remained quiet, expressing all his ardour in the pressing of her hand. From time to time he murmured "Berthe!" and each time she raised her eyes to his with a sweet and tender look. They would look at each other a moment, then his eyes, fascinated by hers, would fall.

They discovered no ideas to exchange. But they were left alone, except that sometimes a dancing couple would cast a glance at them in passing, a furtive glance, as if it were the discreet and confidential witness of a mystery.

A side door opened, a domestic entered, bearing upon a tray an urgent letter which a messenger had brought. Jacques trembled as he took it, seized with a vague and sudden fear, the mysterious fear of sudden misfortune.

He looked for a long time at the envelope, not knowing the handwriting, nor daring to open it, wishing not to read, not to know the contents, desiring to put it in his pocket and to say to himself: "To-morrow. To-morrow, I shall be far away and it will not matter!" But upon the corner were two words underlined: *very urgent*, which frightened him. "Allow me, my dear," said he, and he tore off the wrapper. He read the letter, growing frightfully pale, running over it at a glance, and then seeming slowly to spell it out.

When he raised his head his whole countenance was changed. He stammered: "My dear little girl, a great misfortune has happened to my best friend. He needs me immediately, in a matter of — of life and death. Allow me to go for twenty minutes. I will return immediately."

She, trembling and frightened, murmured: "Go, dear!" not yet being enough of a wife to dare to ask or demand to know anything. And he disappeared. She remained alone, listening to the dance music in the next room.

He had taken the first hat he could find, and an overcoat, and had run down the stairs. As he was going out into the street he stopped under a gaslight in the hall and re-read the letter. It said:

"Sir: A girl called Ravet, who appears to be your ex-mistress, has given birth to a child which she asserts is

yours. The mother is dying and implores you to visit her. I take the liberty of writing to you to ask whether you will grant the last wish of this woman, who seems to be very unhappy and worthy of pity.

"Yours faithfully,

"Dr. Bonnard."

When he entered the room of the dying woman she was already in the last agony. He did not know her at first. The doctor and two nurses were looking after her, and all over the floor were pails full of ice and linen stained with blood.

Water covered the floor, two candles were burning on a table; behind the bed, in a little wicker cradle, a child was crying, and, at each of its cries, the tortured mother would try to move, shivering under the icy compresses.

She was bleeding, wounded to death, killed by this birth. Her life was slipping away; and, in spite of the ice, in spite of all care, the hæmorrhage continued, hastening her last hour.

She recognized Jacques, and tried to raise her hand. She was too weak for that, but the warm tears began to glide down her cheeks.

He fell on his knees beside the bed, seized one of her hands and kissed it frantically; then, little by little, he approached nearer to the wan face, which quivered at his touch. One of the nurses, standing with a candle in her hand, threw the light upon them, and the doctor, who had stepped into the background, looked at them from the end of the room.

With a far-off voice, breathing hard, she said: "I am going to die, dearest; promise me you will re-

main till the end. Oh! do not leave me now, not at the last moment!"

He kissed her brow, her hair, with a groan. "Do not be uneasy," he murmured, "I will stay."

It was some minutes before she was able to speak again, she was so weak and overcome. Then she continued: "It is yours, the little one. I swear it before God, I swear it to you upon my soul, I swear it at the moment of death. I have never loved any man but you — promise me not to abandon it —" He tried to take in his arms the poor, weak body, emptied of its life blood. He stammered, moved by remorse and grief: "I swear to you I will bring it up and love it. It shall never be separated from me." Then she held Jacques in an embrace. Powerless to raise her head, she held up her blanched lips in an appeal for a kiss. He bent his mouth to receive this poor, suppliant caress.

Calmed a little, she murmured in a low tone: "Take it, that I may see that you love it."

He went to the cradle and took up the child.

He placed it gently on the bed between them. The little creature ceased to cry. She whispered: "Do not stir!" And he remained motionless. There he stayed, holding in his burning palms a hand that shook with the tremor of death, as he had held, an hour before, another hand that had trembled with the tremor of love. From time to time he looked at the hour, with a furtive glance of the eye, watching the hand as it passed midnight, then one o'clock, then two.

The doctor had retired. The two nurses, after roaming around for some time with light step, slept

now in their chairs. The child slept, and the mother, whose eyes were closed, seemed to be resting also.

Suddenly, as the pale daylight began to filter through the torn curtains, she extended her arms with so startling and violent a motion that she almost threw the child upon the floor. There was a rattling in her throat; then she lay on her back motionless, dead.

The nurses, who had hastened to her side, said: "It is over."

He looked once at this woman he had loved, then at the hand that marked four o'clock, and, forgetting his overcoat, fled in his evening clothes with the child in his arms.

After she had been left alone, his young bride had waited calmly at first, in the Japanese boudoir. Then, seeing that he did not return, she went back to the drawing-room, indifferent and quiet in appearance, but frightfully disturbed. Her mother, perceiving her alone, asked where her husband was. She replied: "In his room; he will return presently."

After an hour, as everbody asked about him, she told of the letter, of the change in Jacques' face, and her fears of some misfortune.

They still waited. The guests gone; only the parents and near relatives remained. At midnight, they put the bride in her bed, shaking with sobs. Her mother and two aunts were seated on the bed listening to her weeping. Her father had gone to the police headquarters to make inquiries. At five o'clock a light sound was heard in the corridor. The door opened and closed softly. Then suddenly a

cry, like the mewing of a cat, went through the house, breaking the silence.

All the women of the house were up with one bound, and Berthe was the first to spring forward, in spite of her mother and her aunts, clothed only in her night-robe.

Jacques was standing in the middle of the room, livid, breathing hard, holding a child in his arms.

The four frightened women looked at him, but Berthe suddenly took courage, her heart wrung with anguish, and ran to him saying: "What is it? Tell me! What is it?"

He looked as if he had lost his senses and answered in a husky voice: "It is — it is — I have a child, and its mother has just died." And he put into her arms the howling little baby.

Berthe, without saying a word, seized the child and embraced it, straining it to her heart. Then, turning toward her husband with her eyes full of tears, she said: "The mother is dead, you say?" He answered: "Yes, just died — in my arms — I had broken with her since last summer — I knew nothing about it — only the doctor sent for me and —"

Then Berthe murmured: "Well, we will bring up this little one."

THE PARDON

SHE had been brought up in one of those families who live shut up in themselves, and seem to be remote from everything. They pay no attention to political events, although they chat about them at table, and changes in government seem so far, so very far away that they are spoken of only as a matter of history — like the death of Louis XVI., or the landing of Napoleon.

Customs change, fashions succeed each other, but this is hardly perceptible in the family where old traditions are always followed. And if some impossible story arises in the neighbourhood, the scandal of it dies at the threshold of this house.

The father and mother, alone in the evening, sometimes exchange a few words on such a subject, but in an undertone, as if the walls had ears.

With great discretion, the father says: "Do you know about this terrible affair in the Rivoil family?"

And the mother replies: "Who would have believed it? It is frightful!"

The children have no suspicion of anything, but come to the age of living, in their turn, with a bandage over their eyes and minds, without ever suspecting any other kind of existence, without knowing that one does not always think as one speaks, nor speak as one acts, without knowing that it is

necessary to live at war with the world, or at least in armed peace, without surmising that the ingenuous are frequently deceived, the sincere trifled with, and the good wronged.

Some go on until death in this blindness of probity, loyalty, and honour; so upright that nothing can open their eyes. Others, undeceived, without realizing why, are weighed down with despair, and die believing that they are the puppets of exceptional fate, the miserable victims of unlucky circumstance or particularly bad men.

The Savignols married their daughter Berthe when she was eighteen. Her husband was a young man from Paris, Georges Baron, whose business was on the Stock Exchange. He was an attractive youth, with a smooth tongue, and he observed all the outward proprieties necessary. But at the bottom of his heart he sneered a little at his guileless parents-in-law, calling them, among his friends, "My dear fossils."

He belonged to a good family, and the young girl was rich. He took her to live in Paris.

She became one of the numerous race of provincials in Paris. She remained ignorant of the great city, of its elegant people, of its pleasures and its customs, as she had always been ignorant of the perfidy and mystery of life.

Shut up in her own household, she only knew the street she lived in, and when she ventured into another quarter, it seemed to her that she had journeyed far, into an unknown, strange city. She would say in the evening:

"I crossed the boulevards to-day."

Two or three times a year, her husband took her to the theatre. These were great events not to be forgotten, which she recalled continually.

Sometimes at table, three months afterwards, she would suddenly burst out laughing and exclaim: "Do you remember that ridiculous actor who imitated the cock's crowing?"

All her interests were limited to two allied families, who represented the whole of humanity to her. She designated them by the distinguishing prefix "the," calling them respectively "the Martinets," or "the Michelints."

Her husband lived according to his fancy, coming home at whatever hour he wished, sometimes at daybreak, pretending business, and feeling in no way constrained, so sure was he that no suspicion would ruffle this candid soul.

But one morning she received an anonymous letter. She was dismayed, being too upright to understand the infamous accusations, to scorn this letter, whose author declared himself to be moved by interest in her happiness, by hatred of all evil and love of truth.

But it revealed to her that her husband had had a mistress for two years, a young widow, Mme. Rosset, at whose house he spent all his evenings.

She knew neither how to pretend nor to dissimulate, to spy or to plan any sort of ruse. When he returned for luncheon, she threw him the letter, sobbing, and then fled from the room.

He had time to understand the matter and prepare his answer before he rapped at his wife's door. She opened it immediately, without looking at him.

He smiled, sat down, and drew her to his knee. In a sweet voice, and a little jocosely, he said:

"My dear little one, Mme. Rosset is a friend of mine. I have known her for ten years and like her very much. I may add that I know twenty other families of whom I have not spoken to you, knowing that you care nothing for the world or for forming new friendships. But in order to end, once for all, these infamous lies, I will ask you to dress yourself, after luncheon, and we will go to pay a visit to this young lady, who will become your friend at once, I am sure." She embraced her husband eagerly; and, from feminine curiosity, which never sleeps once it has been aroused, she did not refuse to go to see this unknown woman, of whom, in spite of everything, she was still suspicious. She felt by instinct that a known danger is sooner overcome.

They were ushered into a pretty little apartment on the fourth floor of a handsome house, full of bric-à-brac and artistically decorated. After about five minutes' waiting, in a drawing-room where the light was dimmed by draperies, hangings, and curtains tastefully arranged, a door opened and a young woman appeared. She was very dark, small, rather plump, and looked astonished, although she smiled. Georges presented them. "My wife, Madame Julie Rosset."

The young widow uttered a little cry of astonishment and joy, and came forward with both hands extended. She had not hoped for this happiness, she said, knowing that Madame Baron saw no one. But she was so happy! She was so fond of Georges! (She said "Georges" quite naturally, with sisterly

familiarity.) And she had had a great desire to know his young wife, and to love her, too.

At the end of a month these two friends were never apart from each other. They met every day, often twice a day, and nearly always dined together, either at one house or at the other. Georges scarcely ever went out now, no longer alleging business engagements, but he said he loved his own chimney corner.

And when finally an apartment was vacant in the house where Madame Rosset resided, Madame Baron hastened to take it in order to be nearer her new friend.

During two whole years there was a friendship between them without a cloud, a friendship of heart and soul, absolute, tender, devoted, and delightful. Berthe could not speak without mentioning Julie's name, for to her Julie represented perfection. She was happy with a perfect happiness, calm and secure.

But Madame Rosset fell ill. Berthe never left her. She passed nights of despair; her husband, too, was broken-hearted.

One morning, on coming out from his visit the doctor took Georges and his wife aside, and announced that he found the condition of their friend very grave.

When he had gone out, the young people, stricken down, looked at each other and then began to weep. They both watched at night by the bedside. Every moment Berthe would embrace the sick woman tenderly, while Georges, standing silently at the foot of her couch, would look at them with dogged persistence. The next day she was worse.

Finally, toward evening, she declared herself better, and persuaded her friends to go home to dinner.

They were sitting sadly at table, scarcely eating anything, when the maid brought Georges an envelope. He opened it, turned pale, and rising, said to his wife, in a constrained way: "Excuse me, I must leave you for a moment. I will return in ten minutes. Please don't go out." And he ran into his room for his hat.

Berthe waited, tortured by a new fear. But, yielding in all things, she would not go up to her friend's room again until he had returned.

As he did not re-appear, the thought came to her to look in his room to see whether he had taken his gloves, which would show whether he had really gone somewhere.

She saw them there, at first glance. Near them lay a crumpled paper, where he had thrown it.

She recognized it immediately; it was the one that had just been given to Georges.

And a burning temptation took possession of her, the first of her life, to read — to know. Her conscience struggled in revolt, but the itch of an exacerbated and cruel curiosity impelled her hand. She seized the paper, opened it, recognized at once the handwriting as that of Julie, a trembling hand, written in pencil. She read:

"Come alone and embrace me, my poor dear; I am going to die."

She could not understand it all at once, but stood stupefied, struck especially by the thought of death. Then, suddenly, the familiarity of it seized upon

her mind. This came like a great light, illuminating her whole life, showing her the infamous truth, all their treachery, all their perfidy. She saw now their prolonged cunning, their sly looks, her good faith abused, her confidence deceived. She saw them looking into each other's face, under the shade of her lamp in the evening, reading from the same book, exchanging glances at the end of the pages.

And her heart, stirred with indignation, bruised with suffering, sank into an abyss of despair that had no boundaries.

When she heard steps, she fled and shut herself in her room.

Her husband called her: "Come quickly, Madame Rosset is dying!"

Berthe appeared at her door and said with trembling lip:

"Go alone to her; she has no need of me."

He looked at her wildly, dazed with grief, and repeated:

"Quick, quick! She is dying!"

Berthe answered: "You would prefer if it were I."

Then he understood, probably, and left her to herself, going up again to the dying woman.

There he wept without fear, or shame, indifferent to the grief of his wife, who would no longer speak to him, nor look at him, but who lived shut in with her disgust and angry revolt, praying to God morning and evening.

They lived together, nevertheless, eating together face to face, mute and hopeless.

After a time, he recovered his calm, but she would

not pardon him. And so life continued hard for them both.

For a whole year they lived thus, strangers one to the other. Berthe almost became mad.

Then one morning, having set out at dawn, she returned about eight o'clock, carrying in both hands an enormous bouquet of roses, of white roses, all white.

She sent word to her husband that she would like to speak to him. He came in disturbed, troubled.

"Let us go out together," she said to him. "Take these flowers, they are too heavy for me."

He took the bouquet and followed his wife. A carriage awaited them, which started as soon as they were seated.

It stopped before the gate of a cemetery. Then Berthe, her eyes full of tears, said to Georges: "Take me to her grave."

He trembled, without knowing why, but walked on in front, holding the flowers in his arms. Finally he stopped before a shaft of white marble and pointed to it without a word.

She took the bouquet from him, and, kneeling, placed it at the foot of the grave. Then she sank into an unfamiliar prayer of supplication.

Her husband stood behind her, weeping, haunted by memories.

She arose and put out her hands to him.

"If you wish, we will be friends," she said.

THE WOLF

THIS is what the old Marquis d'Arville told us after a dinner in honour of Saint-Hubert, at the house of Baron des Ravels. They had run down a stag that day. The Marquis was the only one of the guests who had not taken part in the chase. He never hunted.

During the whole of the long repast, they had talked of scarcely anything but the massacre of animals. Even the ladies interested themselves in the sanguinary and often unlikely stories, while the speakers mimicked the attacks and combats between man and beast, raising their arms and speaking in thunderous tones.

M. d'Arville talked well, with a certain poetical flourish that was full of effect. He must have repeated this story often, he told it so smoothly, never halting at a choice of words in which to clothe an image.

"Gentlemen, I never hunt, nor did my father, nor my grandfather, nor my great-grandfather. The last named was the son of a man who hunted more than all of you. He died in 1764. I will tell you how. He was named Jean, and was married, and became the father of the man who was my great-grandfather. He lived with his younger brother, François d'Arville, in our castle, in the midst of a deep forest in Lorraine.

"François d'Arville always remained a bachelor out of his love for hunting. They both hunted from one end of the year to the other without cessation or weariness. They loved nothing else, understood nothing else, talked only of this, and lived for this alone.

"They were possessed by this terrible, inexorable passion. It consumed them, having taken entire control of them, leaving no place for anything else. They had given orders that they were never to be disturbed when they were hunting, for any reason whatsoever. My great-grandfather was born while his father was following a fox, but Jean d'Arville did not interrupt his sport, and swore that the little beggar might have waited until after the death-cry! His brother François showed himself still more hot-headed than he. The first thing on rising, he would go to see the dogs, then the horses; then he would shoot some birds about the place, until it was time to set out hunting larger game.

"They were called in the country Monsieur le Marquis and Monsieur le Cadet: noblemen then did not act as do the interlopers of our time, who wish to establish in their titles a descending scale of rank, for the son of a marquis is no more a count, or the son of a viscount a baron, than the son of a general is a colonel by birth. But the petty vanity of our time finds profit in this arrangement.

"To return to my ancestors:

"They were, it appears, immoderately large, bony, hairy, violent, and vigorous. The younger one was even taller than the elder, and had such a voice that,

according to a legend of which he was very proud, all the leaves of the forest moved when he shouted. When they were mounted, ready for the chase, it must have been a superb sight to see these two giants astride their great horses.

"Toward the middle of the winter of that year, 1764, the cold was excessive and the wolves became ferocious.

"They even attacked belated peasants, roamed around houses at night, howled from sunset to sunrise, and ravaged the barns.

"Very soon a rumour was circulated. It was said that a colossal wolf, of grayish-white colour, which had eaten two children, devoured the arm of a woman, strangled all the watchdogs of the country, was now coming without fear into the inclosures and smelling around the doors. Many inhabitants affirmed that they had felt his breath, which made the lights flicker. Shortly a panic ran through all the province. No one dared to go out after nightfall. The very shadows seemed haunted by the image of this beast.

"The brothers d'Arville resolved to find and slay him. So they called together all the gentlemen of the country for a big hunt.

"It was in vain. They beat the forests and scoured the thickets to no purpose; they saw nothing of him. They killed wolves, but not that one. And each night after the hunt, the beast, as if to avenge himself, attacked some traveller, or devoured some cattle, always far from the place where they had sought him.

"Finally, one night he found a way into the

pigsty of the d'Arville castle and ate two beauties of the best breed.

"The two brothers were furious, interpreting the attack as one of bravado on the part of the monster — a direct injury, a defiance. Therefore, taking all their best-trained hounds, accustomed to follow the most redoubtable quarry, they set out to run down the beast, their hearts filled with rage.

"From dawn until the sun descended behind the great leafless trees, they beat about the forests with no result.

"At last, both of them, angry and disheartened, turned their horses' steps into a bypath bordered by brushwood, marvelling at the power of this wolf to baffle their knowledge, and suddenly seized with a mysterious fear.

"The elder said:

"'This can be no ordinary beast. It almost looks as if he can reason like a man.'

"The younger replied:

"'Perhaps we should get our cousin, the Bishop, to bless a bullet for him, or ask a priest to pronounce some words to help us.'

"Then they were silent.

"Jean continued: 'Look at the sun; how red it is. The great wolf will do mischief to-night.'

"He had scarcely finished speaking when his horse reared. François's horse started to run at the same time. A large bush covered with dead leaves rose before them, and a colossal beast, grayish-white, sprang out, scampering away through the wood.

"Both gave a grunt of satisfaction, and bending to the necks of their heavy horses, they urged them

on with the weight of their bodies, driving them forward with such speed, exciting them, hastening them with voice and spur, that these strong riders seemed to carry the weight of their beasts between their knees, carrying them along as if they were flying.

"Thus they rode, at full speed, crashing through thickets, crossing ravines, climbing up the sides of hills, and plunging into gorges, sounding the horn with loud blasts, to arouse the people and the dogs of the neighbourhood.

"But suddenly, in the course of this breakneck ride, my ancestor struck his forehead against a large branch and fractured his skull. He fell to the ground as if dead, while his frightened horse disappeared into the shadows that were enveloping the woods.

"The younger d'Arville stopped short, sprang to the ground, seized his brother in his arms, and saw that his brains were coming out of the wound with his blood.

"He sat down beside him, took his disfigured and gory head upon his knees, looking earnestly at the lifeless face. Little by little a fear crept over him, a strange fear that he had never before felt, fear of the shadows, of the solitude, of the lonely woods, and also of the chimerical wolf, which had now avenged itself by killing his brother.

"The shadows deepened, the branches of the trees crackled in the sharp cold. François arose shivering, incapable of remaining there any longer, and already feeling his strength fail. There was nothing to be heard, neither the voice of the dogs nor the sound of the horns; all within this invisible

horizon was mute. And in this gloomy silence and the chill of evening there was something strange and frightful.

"With his powerful hands he seized Jean's huge body and laid it across the saddle to take it home; then he resumed his way slowly, his mind troubled by horrible, extraordinary images, as if he were intoxicated.

"Suddenly, along the path darkened by the night, a great form passed. It was the wolf. A violent fit of terror seized upon the hunter; something cold, like a stream of water, seemed to glide down his back, and he made the sign of the cross, like a monk haunted by devils, so dismayed was he by the reappearance of the frightful wanderer. Then, his eyes falling upon the inert body before him, his fear was quickly changed to anger, and he trembled with inordinate rage.

"He pricked his horse and darted after him.

"He followed him through copses, ravines, and great forests, traversing woods that he no longer recognized, his eyes fixed upon a white spot, which was ever flying from him as night covered the earth.

"His horse also seemed moved by an unknown force and ardour. He galloped on with neck extended, crashing over small trees and rocks, with the body of the dead man stretched across him on the saddle. Brambles caught in his hair; his head, where it struck the enormous tree trunks, spattered them with blood; his spurs tore off pieces of bark.

"Suddenly the animal and its rider came out of the forest, and rushed into a valley as the moon appeared above the hills. This valley was stony and

shut in by enormous rocks, with no other outlet; and the wolf, caught in a corner, turned around.

"François gave a shout of joy and revenge which the echoes repeated like a roll of thunder. He leaped from his horse, knife in hand.

"The bristling beast, with rounded back, was awaiting him, his eyes shining like two stars. But before joining battle, the strong hunter, grasping his brother, seated him upon a rock, supporting his head, which was now but a mass of blood, with stones, and cried aloud to him, as to one deaf: 'Look, Jean! Look here!'

"Then he threw himself upon the monster. He felt himself strong enough to overthrow a mountain, to crush the rocks in his hands. The beast tried to bite, and to rip up his stomach; but the man had seized it by the throat, without even making use of his weapon, and was strangling it gently, listening to its breath stopping in its throat, and its heart ceasing to beat. And he laughed with mad joy, clutching it more and more strongly with a terrible hold, and crying out in his delirium: 'Look, Jean! Look!' All resistance ceased. The body of the wolf was limp. He was dead.

"Then François, taking him in his arms, threw him down at the feet of his elder brother, crying out in expectant voice: 'Here, here, Jean, dear, here he is!'

"Then he placed upon the saddle the two bodies, the one above the other, and started on his way.

"He returned to the castle laughing and weeping, like Gargantua at the birth of Pantagruel, shouting in triumph and stamping with delight in relating

the death of the beast, and moaning and tearing at his beard in telling the death of his brother.

"Often, later, when he recalled that day, he would declare, with tears in his eyes: 'If only poor Jean had seen me strangle the beast, he would have died happy, I am sure!'

"The widow of my ancestor inspired in her son a horror of hunting, which was transmitted from father to son down to myself."

The Marquis d'Arville was silent. Some one asked: "That is a legendary tale, is it not?"

And the narrator replied:

"I swear to you it is true from beginning to end."

Then a lady, in a sweet little voice, declared:

"Well, it is beautiful to have passions like that."

THE LEGEND OF MONT SAINT-MICHEL

I HAD first seen it from Cancale, this fairy castle planted in the sea. I had seen it dimly, like a gray shadow rising in the foggy sky. I saw it again from Avranches at sunset. The immense stretch of sand was red, the horizon was red, the whole boundless bay was red; alone, the Abbey, growing out there in the distance like a fantastic manor, like a dream palace, incredibly strange and beautiful — this alone remained almost black in the purple of the dying day.

The following morning at dawn I went towards it across the sands. My eyes fastened on this gigantic jewel, as big as a mountain, cut like a cameo, and as dainty as lace. The nearer I approached the greater my admiration grew, for perhaps nothing in the world is more wonderful or more perfect.

As surprised as if I had discovered the habitation of a god, I wandered through those halls supported by frail or massive columns, through those corridors open to the sky, raising my eyes in wonder to those spires which looked like rockets starting for the sky, and to that incredible crowd of towers, of gargoyles, of slender and charming ornaments, fire-

works of stone, granite lace, a masterpiece of colossal and delicate architecture.

As I was looking up in ecstasy, a Lower Normandy peasant came up to me and told me the story of the great quarrel between Saint Michel and the Devil.

A sceptical genius has said: "God made man in His image; man has returned the compliment."

This saying is an eternal truth, and it would be very curious to write the history of the local divinity on every continent, as well as the history of the patron saints in each one of our provinces. The negro has his ferocious man-eating idols; the polygamous Mahometan fills his paradise with women; the Greeks, like a practical people, have deified all the passions.

Every village in France is under the influence of some protecting saint, modified according to the characteristics of the inhabitants.

Saint Michel watches over Lower Normandy, Saint Michel, the radiant and victorious angel, the sword-carrier, the hero of Heaven, the victorious, the conqueror of Satan.

But this is how the Lower Normandy peasant, cunning, underhand, and tricky, understands and tells of the struggle between the great Saint and the Devil: —

To escape from the malice of his neighbour the Demon, Saint Michel built himself, in the open ocean, this habitation worthy of an archangel; and only such a saint could build a residence of such magnificence.

But, as he still feared the approaches of the

Evil One, he surrounded his domain with quicksands, more treacherous even than the sea.

The Devil lived in a humble cottage on the hill; but he owned all the pastures surrounded by the sea, the rich lands where grow the finest crops, the prosperous valleys, and all the fertile hills of the country; but the Saint ruled only over the sands. So Satan was rich, whereas Saint Michel was as poor as a beggar.

After a few years of fasting the Saint grew tired of this state of affairs, and began to think of some compromise with the Devil; but the matter was by no means easy, as Satan kept a good hold on his crops.

He thought the thing over for about six months; then one morning he set out for land. The Demon was eating his soup in front of his door when he saw the Saint; he immediately rushed toward him, kissed the hem of his sleeve, invited him in, and offered him refreshments.

Saint Michel drank a bowl of milk and then began: "I have come here to propose to you a good bargain."

The Devil, candid and trustful, answered: "Very well."

"Here it is. Give me all your lands."

Satan, growing alarmed, tried to speak: "But —"

The Saint continued: "Listen first. Give me all your lands. I will take care of all the work, the plowing, the sowing, the fertilizing, everything, and we will share the crops equally. Do you agree?"

The Devil, who was naturally lazy, accepted. He

only asked in addition for a few of those delicious red mullet which are caught around the lonely hill. Saint Michel promised the fish.

They shook hands and spat on one side to show that it was a bargain, and the Saint continued: "Here, so that you will have nothing to complain of, choose whatever you prefer: that part of the harvest which will be above ground, or in the ground." Satan cried out: "I choose all that will be above ground."

"It's a bargain!" said the Saint. And he went away.

Six months later, all over the immense domain of the Devil, one could see nothing but carrots, turnips, onions, salsify, all the plants whose juicy roots are good and savoury, and whose useless leaves are good for nothing but for feeding animals.

Satan got nothing and wished to break the contract, calling Saint Michel a swindler.

But the Saint, who had developed quite a taste for agriculture, went back to see the Devil, and said: "Really, I hadn't thought of that at all; it was just an accident; no fault of mine. And to make things fair with you, this year I'll let you take everything that is under the ground."

"Very well," answered Satan.

The following spring, all the Evil Spirit's lands were covered with heavy corn, oats as big as beans, linseed, magnificent colzas, red clover, peas, cabbage, artichokes, everything that blossoms into grains or fruit in the sunlight.

Once more Satan received nothing, and this time he completely lost his temper. He took back his

fields and remained deaf to all the new overtures of his neighbour.

A whole year rolled by. From the top of his lonely manor, Saint Michel looked at the distant and fertile lands, and watched the Devil direct the work, take in his crops, and thresh the corn. And he grew angry, exasperated at his powerlessness. As he was no longer able to deceive Satan, he decided to wreak vengeance on him, and he went out to invite him to dinner for the following Monday.

"You have been very unfortunate in your dealings with me," he said; "I know it; but I don't want any ill feeling between us, and I expect you to dine with me. I'll give you some good things to eat."

Satan, who was as greedy as he was lazy, accepted eagerly. On the day which had been decided on, he donned his finest clothes and set out for the mount.

Saint Michel sat him down to a magnificent meal. First there was a *vol-au-vent*, full of cocks' crests and kidneys, with meat-balls, then two big red mullet with cream sauce, a turkey stuffed with chestnuts soaked in wine, some salt-marsh lamb as tender as possible, vegetables which melted in the mouth, and nice warm *galette* which was brought on smoking and gave out a delicious odour of butter.

They drank pure cider, sparkling and sweet, and powerful red wine, and after each course more room was made with some old apple brandy.

The Devil drank and ate to his heart's content; in fact, he took so much that he found himself uncomfortable.

Then Saint Michel arose in anger, and cried, in a voice like thunder: "What! before me, rascal! you dare — before me —"

Satan, terrified, ran away, and the Saint, seizing a stick, pursued him. They ran around through the halls, turning around the pillars, running up the staircases, galloping along the cornices, jumping from gargoyle to gargoyle. The poor Demon, who was terribly ill, was running about madly and soiling the Saint's home. At last he found himself at the top of the last terrace, from which could be seen the immense bay, with its distant cities, sands, and pastures. He could no longer escape, and the Saint came up behind him and gave him a furious kick, which shot him through space like a cannon-ball.

He shot through the air like a javelin and fell down heavily in front of the town of Mortain. His horns and claws stuck deep into the rock, which keeps through eternity the traces of this fall of Satan's.

He stood up again, limping, crippled until the end of time, and as he looked at the fatal Abbey in the distance, standing out against the setting sun, he understood well that he would always be vanquished in this unequal struggle; and he went away limping, heading for distant countries, leaving to his enemy his fields, his hills, his valleys, and his pastures.

And this is how Saint Michel, the patron saint of Normandy, vanquished the Devil.

Another people would have dreamed of this battle in an entirely different manner.

A CHRISTMAS TALE

DOCTOR BONENFANT was searching his memory, saying, half aloud: "A Christmas story — some remembrance of Christmas?"

Suddenly he cried: "Yes, I have one, and a strange one too; it is a fantastic story. I have seen a miracle! yes, ladies, a miracle, and on Christmas night."

You are astonished to hear me speak thus, a man who does not believe in much. Nevertheless, I have seen a miracle! I have seen it, I tell you, seen with my own eyes, that is what I call seeing.

Was I very much surprised, you ask? Not at all; because if I do not believe in your beliefs, I believe in faith, and I know that it can remove mountains. I could cite many examples; but I might make you indignant, and I should run the chance of lessening the effect of my story.

In the first place, I must confess that, if I have not been convinced and converted by what I have seen, I have at least been strongly moved; and I am going to strive to tell it to you naïvely, as if I had the credulity of an Auvergnat.

I was then a country doctor, living in the town of Rolleville, in the centre of Normandy. The winter that year was terrible. By the end of November the

snow came after a week of frost. One could see from afar the great snow clouds coming from the north, and then the white flakes began to fall. In one night the whole plain was buried. Farms, isolated in their square inclosures, behind their curtains of great trees powdered with hoar-frost, seemed to sleep under the accumulation of this thick, light covering.

No noise was heard in the still countryside. The crows alone in large flocks outlined long festoons in the sky, seeking their livelihood to no purpose, swooping down upon the pale fields and picking at the snow with their great beaks. There was nothing to be heard but the vague, continuous rustle of this white powder as it persistently fell. This lasted for eight full days and then stopped. The earth had on its back a mantle five feet in thickness. And, during the next three weeks, a sky as clear as blue crystal by day spread itself out over this smooth, white mass, hard and glistening with frost, and at night all studded with stars, that looked as if they were made of hoar-frost.

The plain, the hedges, the elms of the inclosures, all seemed dead, killed by the cold. Neither man nor beast went out. Only the chimneys of the cottages, clothed in a white shift, revealed concealed life by the fine threads of smoke which mounted straight into the frosty air. From time to time one heard the trees crack, as if their wooden limbs were breaking under the bark; and sometimes a great branch would detach itself and fall, the resistless cold petrifying the sap and breaking the fibres. Dwellings set here and there in fields seemed

a hundred miles away from one another. One lived as one could. I alone endeavoured to go to my nearest patients, constantly exposing myself to the danger of remaining buried in some hole.

I soon perceived that a mysterious terror had spread over the country. Such a plague, they thought, was not natural. They pretended that they heard voices at night, sharp whistling and passing cries. These cries and the whistling came, without doubt, from migratory birds which travelled at twilight and flew in flocks toward the south. But it was impossible to make frightened people listen to reason. Fear had taken possession of their minds, and they were expecting some extraordinary event.

The forge of old Vatinel was situated at the end of the hamlet of Epivent, on the main road, now invisible and deserted. As the people needed bread, the blacksmith resolved to go to the village. He remained some hours chattering with the inhabitants of the six houses which formed the centre of the district, took his bread and his news and a little of the fear which had spread over the region and set out before night.

Suddenly, in skirting a hedge, he believed he saw an egg on the snow; yes, an egg was lying there, all white like the rest of the world. He bent over it, and in fact it was an egg. Where did it come from? What hen could have gone out there and laid an egg in that spot? The smith was astonished; he could not understand it; but he picked it up and took it to his wife.

"See, wife, here is an egg that I found on the road."

The woman shook her head:

"An egg on the road? In this kind of weather! You must be drunk, surely."

"No, no, woman, it certainly was at the foot of the hedge, and not frozen but still warm. Take it; I put it in my bosom so that it wouldn't cool off. You shall have it for your dinner."

The egg was soon shining in the iron pot where the soup was simmering, and the smith began to relate what he had heard around the country. The woman listened, pale with excitement.

"Of course I have heard some whistling," said she, "but it seemed to come from the chimney."

They sat down to table, ate their soup first and then, while the husband was spreading the butter on his bread, the woman took the egg and examined it with suspicious eye.

"And if there should be something in this egg," said she.

"What could there be in it?"

"How do I know?"

"Go ahead and eat it. Don't be a fool."

She opened the egg. It was like all eggs, and very fresh. She started to eat it but hesitated, tasting, then leaving, then tasting it again. The husband said:

"Well, how does that egg taste?"

She did not answer, but finished swallowing it. Then, suddenly, she stared at her husband, with fixed, haggard, terrified eyes, raised her arms, turned and twisted them, convulsed from head to foot, and rolled on the floor, sending forth horrible shrieks. All night she struggled in these frightful spasms,

trembling with fright, deformed by hideous convulsions. The smith, unable to restrain her, was obliged to bind her. And she screamed without ceasing, untiringly:

"I have it in my body! I have it in my body!"

I was called the next day. I ordered all the sedatives known, but without effect. She was mad. Then, with incredible swiftness, in spite of the obstacle of deep snow, the news, the strange news ran from farm to farm: "The smith's wife is possessed!" And they came from everywhere around, not daring to go into the house; from a safe distance they listened to the cries of the frightened woman, whose voice was so strong that one could scarcely believe it belonged to a human creature.

The village priest was sent for. He was a simple old man. He came in surplice, as if to administer comfort to the dying, and pronounced with extended hands some formulæ of exorcism, while four men held the foaming, writhing woman on the bed. But the spirit was not driven out.

Christmas came without any change in the weather. On Christmas Eve morning the priest came for me.

"I wish," said he, "to have this unfortunate woman at mass, to-night. Perhaps God will work a miracle in her favour at the same hour that he was born of a woman."

I replied: "I approve heartily. If she can be touched by the sacred service (and nothing could be more likely to move her), she can be saved without other remedies."

The old priest murmured: "You are not a believer, Doctor, but you will help me, will you not?" I promised him my help.

The evening came, and then the night. The bell of the church was ringing, throwing its plaintive voice across the dreary waste, the vast extent of white, frozen snow. Some black figures were wending their way slowly in groups, obedient to the call from the bell. The full moon shone with a strong, pale light on the horizon, rendering more visible the desolation of the fields. I had taken four robust men with me, and with them repaired to the forge.

The possessed woman was bound to her bed, and was shouting continually. They clothed her properly, in spite of her violent resistance, and carried her out. The church, illuminated but cold, was now full of people, the choir chanted their monotonous notes; the serpent hummed; the little bell of the acolyte tinkled, regulating the movements of the faithful.

I had shut the woman and her guards into the kitchen of the parish house and awaited the moment that I believed favourable.

I chose the time immediately following communion. All the peasants, men and women, had received their God, to soften His rigour. A great silence prevailed while the priest finished the divine mystery. Upon my order, the door opened and the four men brought in the mad woman.

When she saw the lights, the crowd on their knees, the choir illuminated, and the gilded tabernacle, she struggled with such vigour that she almost

escaped from us, and she gave forth cries so piercing that a shiver of fright ran through the church. All bowed their heads; some fled. She had no longer the form of a woman, as she writhed and twisted in our grasp, her countenance drawn, her eyes mad. They dragged her up to the steps of the choir, and then she was firmly held squatting on the floor.

The priest arose; he was waiting. When there was a moment of quiet, he took in his hands the monstrance, bound with bands of gold, in the middle of which was the white wafer, and, advancing some steps, extended both arms above his head and presented it to the frightened stare of the maniac. She continued to howl, with eyes fixed upon the shining object. And the priest remained so motionless that he looked like a statue.

This lasted a long, long time. The woman seemed seized with fear, fascinated; she looked fixedly at the monstrance; she was still seized with terrible shivering fits, but they did not last so long, and she cried out incessantly, but with a less piercing voice. And this lasted again for some time.

It looked as if she could no longer lower her eyes; as if they were riveted on the Host; she did nothing but groan; her rigid body relaxed, and she sank down exhausted. The crowd was prostrate, with foreheads pressed to the ground.

The possessed woman was now lowering her eyelids rapidly, then raising them again, as if powerless to endure the sight of her God. She was silent. And then I suddenly perceived that her eyes were closed. She was sleeping like a somnambulist, hypnotized, — pardon! conquered by the prolonged

contemplation of the monstrance with its shining rays of gold, overcome by Christ victorious.

They carried her out, inert, while the priest went up to the altar. The congregation, thrown into wonderment, intoned a *Te Deum* of gratitude.

The smith's wife slept for forty hours uninterruptedly, then she awoke without any remembrance either of the possession or of the deliverance. That, ladies, is the miracle which I witnessed.

Doctor Bonenfant remained silent, then he added, in rather vexed tones:

"I could not refuse to swear to it in writing."

A WIDOW

IT WAS during the hunting season, at the de Banville country seat. The autumn was rainy and dull. The red leaves, instead of crackling under foot, rotted in the hollows beneath the heavy showers.

The almost leafless forest was as humid as a bath-room. When you entered it beneath the huge trees shaken by the winds, a mouldy odour, a vapour from fallen rain, soaking grass and damp earth, enveloped you. And the hunters, bending beneath this continuous downpour, the dogs with their tails hanging and their coats matted, and the young huntswomen in their close-fitting habits drenched with rain, returned each evening depressed in body and spirit.

In the great drawing-room, after dinner, they played lotto, but without enthusiasm, while the wind shook the shutters violently, and turned the old weather-vanes into spinning-tops. Some one suggested telling stories, in the way we read of in books; but no one could invent anything very amusing. The hunters narrated some of their adventures with the gun, the slaughter of rabbits, for example; and the ladies racked their brains without finding anywhere the imagination of Scheherazade.

They were about to abandon this form of diversion, when a young lady, carelessly playing with

the hand of her old, unmarried aunt, noticed a little ring made of blond hair, which she had often seen before but thought nothing about.

Moving it gently about the finger she said, suddenly: "Tell us the story of this ring, Auntie; it looks like the hair of a child —"

The old maid reddened and then grew pale, and in a trembling voice she replied: "It is sad, so sad that I never care to speak about it. All the unhappiness of my life is centred in it. I was young then, but the memory of it remains so painful that I weep whenever I think of it."

They wished very much to hear the story, but the aunt refused to tell it; finally, they urged so much that she at length consented.

"You have often heard me speak of the Santèze family, now extinct. I knew the last three men of this family. They all died within three months in the same manner. This hair belonged to the last one. He was thirteen years old, when he killed himself for me. That appears very strange to you, doesn't it?

"They were an extraordinary race, a race of fools, if you will, but of charming fools, of fools for love. All, from father to son, had these violent passions, waves of emotion which drove them to most exalted deeds, to fanatical devotion, and even to crime. It was to them what ardent devotion is to certain souls. Those who become monks are not of the same nature as drawing-room favourites. Their relatives used to say: 'as amorous as a Santèze.'

"To see them was to divine this characteristic. They all had curly hair, growing low upon the brow,

curly beards and large eyes, very large, whose rays seemed to penetrate and disturb you, without your knowing just why.

"The grandfather of the one of whom this is the only souvenir, after many adventures, and some duels on account of entanglements with women, when about sixty-five fell passionately in love with the daughter of his farmer. I knew them both. She was blond, pale, distinguished looking, with a soft voice and a sweet look, so sweet that she reminded one of a madonna. The old lord took her home with him, and immediately became so captivated that he could not do without her for a minute. His daughter and his daughter-in-law, who lived in the house, found this perfectly natural, so much was love a tradition of the family. When one was moved by a great passion, nothing surprised them, and, if any one spoke in their presence of thwarted desires, of disunited lovers, or revenge upon some treachery, they would both say, in the same sad tones: 'Oh! how he (or she) must have suffered before coming to that!' Nothing more. They were moved with pity by all dramas of the heart and never spoke slightingly of them, even when they were criminal.

"One autumn, a young man, M. de Gradelle, invited for the hunting, eloped with the young woman.

"M. de Santèze remained calm, as if nothing had happened. But one morning they found him hanging in the kennel in the midst of the dogs.

"His son died in the same fashion, in a hotel in Paris, while on a journey in 1841, after having been deceived by an opera singer.

"He left a child twelve years old, and a widow, the sister of my mother. She came with the little boy to live at my father's house, on our Bertillon estate. I was then seventeen.

"You could not imagine what an astonishing, precocious child this little Santèze was. One would have said that all the power of tenderness, all the exaltation of his race had fallen upon this one, the last. He was always dreaming and walking alone in a great avenue of elms that led from the house to the woods. I often watched this sentimental youngster from my window, as he walked up and down with his hands behind his back, with bowed head, sometimes stopping to look up, as if he saw and comprehended things beyond his age and experience.

"Often after dinner, on clear nights, he would say to me: 'Let us go and dream, Cousin.' And we would go together into the park. He would stop abruptly in the clear spaces, where the white vapour floats, that soft cotton with which the moon decorates the clearings in the woods, and say to me, seizing my hand: 'Look! Look there! But you do not understand me, I feel it. If you understood me, you would be happy. In order to know, one must love.' I would laugh and embrace him, this boy, who adored me so much as to die of love.

"Often, too, after dinner, he would seat himself upon my mother's knee. 'Come, Aunt,' he would say to her, 'tell us some love story.' And my mother, as a joke, would tell him all the family legends, the passionate adventures of his fathers, for thousands of them were mentioned, true and false. It was their reputation that was the undoing

of all these men. They got fancies, and then took pride in living up to the fame of their house.

"The little boy would get excited by these terrible or affecting tales, and sometimes he would clap his hands and cry out: 'I, too; I, too, know how to love, better than any of them.'

"Then he began to pay me his court, so timidly, with such grave tenderness, that we laughed at it. Each morning I had flowers picked by him, and each evening, before going to his room, he would kiss my hand, murmuring: 'I love you!'

"I was guilty, very guilty, and I have wept since, unceasingly, doing penance all my life, by remaining an old maid — or rather, an affianced widow, his widow. I amused myself with this childish devotion, even inciting him. I was coquettish, and seductive, as if I were dealing with a grown man, caressing and deceiving. I excited this child. It was a joke to me, and a pleasing diversion to his mother and mine. He was twelve years old! Think of it! Who would have taken seriously this diminutive passion! I kissed him as much as he wished. I even wrote love letters to him that our mothers read. And he responded with letters of fire, that I still have. He thought our love intimacy was a secret, regarding himself as a man. We had forgotten that he was a Santèze!

"This lasted nearly a year. One evening, in the park, he threw himself down at my knees, kissing the hem of my dress, in a furious burst of passion, repeating: 'I love you! I love you! I love you! I am dying of love for you. If you ever deceive me, understand, if you ever leave me for another, I

shall do as my father did —' And he added in a low voice that gave one the shivers: 'You know what he did!'

"Then, as I remained dumbfounded, he got up and, stretching himself on tiptoe, for I was much taller than he, he repeated in my ear, my name, my first name, 'Geneviève!' in a voice so sweet, so pretty, so tender that I trembled to my very feet.

"I stammered: 'Let us return to the house!' He said nothing further, but followed me. As we were going up the steps, he stopped me and said: 'You know if you abandon me, I shall kill myself.'

"I understood now that I had gone too far, and immediately became more reserved. When he reproached me for it, one day, I answered him: 'You are now too big for this kind of joking, and too young for serious love. I will wait.'

"I believed myself freed from him.

"He was sent away to school in the autumn. When he returned, the following summer, I had become engaged. He understood at once, and for over a week he looked so preoccupied that I was much disturbed.

"The ninth day, in the morning, I perceived, on rising, a little piece of paper slipped under my door. I seized it and read: 'You have abandoned me, and you know what I said. You have ordered my death. As I do not wish to be found by any one but you, come into the park, to the place where last year I said that I loved you, and look up.'

"I felt myself becoming mad. I dressed as quickly as possible, and ran, so that I nearly fell exhausted, to the designated spot. His little school

cap was on the ground in the mud. It had rained all night. I raised my eyes and saw something swinging amongst the leaves, for there was a wind blowing, a strong wind.

"After that, I knew nothing of what I did. I must have shouted, fainted, perhaps, and fallen, then got up and run to the house. I came to my senses in bed, with my mother at my side.

"I at first believed that I had dreamed all this in a frightful delirium. I muttered: 'And he, he — Gontran?' They did not answer.

"It was all true.

"I dared not look at him again, but I asked for a lock of his blond hair. Here — it — is —" And the old lady held out her hand in a gesture of despair.

Then, she used her handkerchief several times, and dried her eyes, and continued: "I broke off my engagement without saying why — and I — have remained always the — widow of this child thirteen years old." Then her head fell upon her breast and she wept pensively for a long time.

And, as they dispersed to their rooms for the night, a burly huntsman, whose quiet she had disturbed somewhat, whispered in the ear of his neighbour:

"What a misfortune to be so sentimental! Don't you think so?"

MADEMOISELLE COCOTTE

WE WERE about to leave the asylum when I noticed in a corner of the courtyard a tall, thin man, obstinately going through the motions of calling an imaginary dog. He would call out, in sweet, tender tones: "Cocotte, my little Cocotte, come here, Cocotte, come here, my beauty," striking his leg, as one does to attract the attention of an animal. I said to the doctor:

"What is the matter with him?"

He replied:

"Oh, that is not an interesting case. He is a coachman called François, who went mad after drowning his dog."

I insisted:

"Do tell me his story. The most simple and humble things sometimes strike most to our hearts."

And here is the adventure of this man, which became known through a groom, his comrade.

In the suburbs of Paris lived a rich, middle-class family. They lived in a fashionable villa in the midst of a park, on the bank of the Seine. Their coachman was this François, a country boy, a little awkward, with a good heart, but simple and easily duped.

When he was returning one evening to his master's house, a dog began to follow him. At first he took

no notice of it, but the persistence of the beast walking at his heels caused him finally to turn around. He looked to see if he knew this dog. No, he had never seen it before.

The dog was frightfully thin and had great hanging dugs. She trotted behind the man with a woeful, famished look, her tail between her legs, her ears close to her head, and stopped when he stopped, starting again when he started.

He tried to drive away this skeleton of a beast: "Get out! Go away! Go, now! Hou! Hou!" She would run away a few steps and then sit down waiting; then, when the coachman started on again, she followed behind him.

He pretended to pick up stones. The animal fled a little way with a great shaking of the flabby dugs, but followed again as soon as the man turned his back.

Then the coachman took pity and called her. The dog approached timidly, her back bent in a circle, and all the ribs showing under the skin. The man stroked these protruding bones and, moved by the misery of the beast, said: "Come along, then!" Immediately she wagged her tail; she felt that she was welcome, adopted; and instead of staying at her new master's heels, she began to run ahead of him.

He installed her on some straw in his stable, then ran to the kitchen in search of bread. When she had eaten her fill, she went to sleep, curled up in a ring.

The next day the coachman told his master, who allowed him to keep the animal. She was a good

beast, intelligent and faithful, affectionate and gentle.

But soon they discovered in her a terrible fault. She was inflamed with love from one end of the year to the other. In a short time she had made the acquaintance of every dog about the country, and they roamed about the place day and night. With the indifference of a harlot, she shared her favours with them, feigning to like each one best, dragging behind her a veritable pack composed of many different models of the barking race, some as large as a fist, others as tall as an ass. She took them on interminable walks along the roads, and when she stopped to rest in the shade, they made a circle about her and looked at her with tongues hanging out.

The people of the country considered her a phenomenon; they had never seen anything like it. The veterinary could not understand it.

When she returned to the stable in the evening, the crowd of dogs besieged the house. They wormed their way through every crevice in the hedge which inclosed the park, devastated the flower beds, broke down the flowers, dug holes in the clumps of plants, exasperating the gardener. They would howl the whole night about the building where their friend lodged, and nothing could persuade them to go away.

In the daytime, they even entered the house. It was an invasion, a plague, a calamity. At every moment the people of the house met on the staircase, and even in the rooms, little yellow pug dogs with bushy tails, hunting dogs, bulldogs, wandering Pomeranians with dirty skins, homeless vagabonds,

and enormous Newfoundland dogs, which frightened the children.

All the unknown dogs for ten miles around came, from one knew not where, and lived, no one knew how, and then disappeared.

Nevertheless, François adored Cocotte. He had called her Cocotte, without malice, although she well deserved the name. And he repeated over and over again: "That dog is human. It only lacks speech."

He had a magnificent collar in red leather made for her, which bore these words, engraved on a copper plate: "Mademoiselle Cocotte, the property of François, the coachman."

She became enormous. She was now as fat as she had once been thin, her body puffed out, under it still hung the long, swaying dugs. She had fattened suddenly and walked with difficulty, her paws wide apart, after the fashion of people that are too stout, her mouth open for breath, and she became exhausted as soon as she tried to run.

She showed a phenomenal fecundity, producing, four times a year, a litter of little animals, belonging to all varieties of the canine race. François, after having chosen the one he would leave her "to take the milk," would pick up the others in his stable apron and pitilessly throw them into the river.

Soon the cook joined her complaints to those of the gardener. She found dogs under her kitchen range, in the cupboards, and in the coal bin, and they stole everything they could see.

The master lost his patience and ordered François to get rid of Cocotte. The man was inconsolable,

and tried to place her somewhere. No one wanted her. Then he resolved to lose her, and put her in charge of a car driver who was to leave her in the country the other side of Paris, near Joinville-le-Pont.

That same evening Cocotte was back.

It became necessary to take stern measures. For the sum of five francs, they persuaded the guard on a train to Havre to take her. He was to let her loose when they arrived.

At the end of three days, she appeared again in her stable, harassed, emaciated, torn and exhausted.

The master took pity on her, and did not insist.

But the dogs soon returned in greater numbers than ever, and were more provoking. And as a great dinner was being given one evening, a truffled fowl was carried off by a dog, under the nose of the cook, who did not dare to take it away.

This time the master was angry, and calling François, said to him hotly: "If you don't drown this beast before to-morrow morning, I shall fire you out, do you understand?"

The man was thunderstruck, but he went up to his room to pack his trunk, preferring to leave his job. Then he thought that he would not be likely to get in anywhere else, dragging this unwelcome beast behind him; he remembered that he was in a good house, well paid and well fed; and he said to himself that it was not worth while giving up all this for a dog. He thought of his own interests and ended by resolving to get rid of Cocotte at dawn the next day.

However, he slept badly. At daybreak he was up; and, taking a strong rope, he went in search

of the dog. She arose slowly, shook herself, stretched her limbs, and came to greet her master. Then his courage failed and he began to stroke her tenderly, smoothing her long ears, kissing her on the muzzle, lavishing upon her all the loving names that he could think of.

A neighbouring clock struck six; he could delay no longer. He opened the door; "Come," said he. The beast wagged her tail, understanding only that she was going out.

They reached the bank and he chose a place where the water seemed deepest. Then he tied one end of the cord to the beautiful leather collar, and taking a great stone, attached it to the other end. Then he seized Cocotte in his arms and kissed her furiously, as one does when taking leave of a person. Then he held her tight around the neck, fondling her and calling her "My pretty Cocotte, my little Cocotte," and she responded as best she could, growling with pleasure.

Ten times he tried to throw her in, and each time his courage failed him.

Then, abruptly, he decided to do it, and, with all his force, hurled her as far as possible. She tried at first to swim, as she did when taking a bath, but her head, dragged by the stone, went under again and again. She threw her master a look of despair, a human look, battling, as a person does when drowning. Then, the whole front part of the body sank while the hind paws kicked madly out of the water; then they disappeared also.

For five minutes bubbles of air came to the surface, as if the river had begun to boil. And

François, haggard, and at his wits' end, with palpitating heart, believed he saw Cocotte writhing in the slime. And he said to himself, with the simplicity of a peasant: "What does she think of me now, the poor beast?"

He almost became mad. He was sick for a month, and each night saw the dog again. He felt her licking his hands; he heard her bark.

They had to call a physician. Finally he grew better; and his master and mistress took him to their estate at Biessard, near Rouen.

There he was still on the bank of the Seine. He began to go bathing. Every morning he went down with the groom to swim across the river.

One day, as they were amusing themselves splashing in the water, François suddenly cried out to his companion:

"Look at what is coming towards us. I am going to make you taste a cutlet."

It was an enormous carcass, swelled and stripped of its hair, its paws moving forward in the air, following the current.

François approached it, and continued to joke:

"By God, it is rather high! What a catch, my boy, there is plenty of meat on it!"

And he turned around it, keeping at a distance from the great, putrefying body.

Then, suddenly, he was silent, and looked at it in strange fashion. He approached it again, this time as if he were going to touch it. He carefully examined the collar, then put out his hand and grasped the neck, twirled it around, drew it towards him, and read upon the green copper that still

adhered to the discoloured leather: "Mademoiselle Cocotte, the property of François, the coachman."

The dead dog had found her master, sixty miles from their home!

He uttered a fearful cry, and began to swim with all his might towards the bank, shouting all the way. And when he reached the land, he ran off wildly, stark naked, through the country. He was mad!

THE JEWELS

MONSIEUR LANTIN having met the young woman at a *soirée*, at the home of the assistant of his department, had fallen head over ears in love with her. She was the daughter of a country tax collector who had died some years previously. She had come to live in Paris, with her mother, who visited a few families in the neighbourhood in the hope of finding a husband for the young lady. They were poor and honest, gentle and quiet.

The young girl was a perfect type of the virtuous woman to whom every sensible young man dreams of one day entrusting his life. Her simple beauty had the charm of angelic modesty, and the imperceptible smile which constantly hovered about her lips seemed to be the reflection of her soul. Everybody sang her praises. People were never tired of saying: "Happy the man who wins her. He could not find a better wife."

M. Lantin, at the time Chief Clerk in the Ministry of the Interior, with a yearly salary of three thousand five hundred francs, proposed for her hand and married her.

He was unspeakably happy with her; she governed his household so cleverly and economically that they seemed to live in luxury. She was full of attentions for her husband, spoiling and coaxing him, and the

charm of her person was so great that six years after their marriage M. Lantin discovered that he loved his wife even more than during the first days when he knew her.

He found fault with only two of her tastes: her love for the theatre, and for false jewelry. Her friends (she was acquainted with some petty officials' wives) frequently procured for her a box at the theatre for popular plays, and even for the first nights; and she dragged her husband, whether he liked it or not, to these amusements, which tired him excessively after his day's work.

So he begged his wife to go to the theatre with some lady of her acquaintance, who would bring her home afterwards. It was a long time before she gave in, as she thought this arrangement was not quite respectable. But finally, to please him, she consented, and he was very grateful.

Now, this love for the theatre soon aroused in her the desire to adorn her person. True, her costumes remained quite simple, and always in good taste, but unpretentious; and her tender grace, her irresistible, humble, smiling charm, seemed to be enhanced by the simplicity of her dresses. But she soon began to ornament her ears with huge rhinestones, which glittered and sparkled like real diamonds. She wore strings of false pearls, bracelets of imitation gold, and combs ornamented with glass made up to look like real stones.

Her husband, who was rather shocked by this love of show, frequently used to say:

"My dear, as you cannot afford to buy real gems, you ought to appear adorned with your beauty and

modesty alone, those are the rarest ornaments of your sex."

But she would smile sweetly, and say:

"What can I do? I like it. It is my only weakness. I know you are right but we cannot change our natures. I should love to have jewelry."

Then she would roll the pearl necklaces around her fingers, and make the cut glass flash, saying:

"Look, are they not lovely? One would swear they were real."

He would then answer, smilingly:

"You have the tastes of a gipsy, my dear."

Often in the evening, when they were enjoying a tête-à-tête by the fireside, she would place on the tea table the leather box containing the "trash," as M. Lantin called it. She would examine the false gems with a passionate attention as though she were tasting a deep and secret joy; and she often insisted on passing a necklace around her husband's neck, and then, laughing heartily, she would exclaim: "How funny you look!" Then she would throw herself into his arms and kiss him passionately.

One evening in winter when she went to the opera, she returned chilled through and through. The next morning she coughed, and eight days later she died of inflammation of the lungs.

Lantin nearly followed her to the grave. His despair was so great that his hair became white in one month. He wept from morning to night, his heart torn with intolerable grief, and his mind haunted by the remembrance, the smile, the voice — by every charm of his dead wife.

Time did not assuage his grief. Often during office hours, while his colleagues were discussing the topics of the day, his face would begin to twitch, his eyes would suddenly fill with tears, and with distorted features he would begin to sob. He had kept his wife's room untouched, and here he would seclude himself daily and think of her, while all the furniture, even her clothes, remained as they were the last day she was alive.

But life soon became a struggle. His income, which in the hands of his wife had covered all household expenses, was now no longer sufficient for his own immediate wants; and he wondered how she could have managed to buy such excellent wines, and such rare delicacies, things which he could no longer procure with his modest resources.

He incurred some debts and he pursued money as people do who are reduced to expedients. One morning, finding himself without a cent in his pocket, a whole week before the end of the month, he resolved to sell something, and, immediately, the thought occurred to him of disposing of his wife's paste jewels. He cherished in his heart a sort of rancour against the false gems, which had always irritated him in the past. The very sight of them spoiled somewhat the memory of his lost darling.

He searched for a long time in the heap of glittering things, for to the last days of her life she had continued obstinately to make purchases, bringing home new gems almost every evening. He decided to sell the heavy necklace which she seemed to prefer, and which, he thought, ought to be worth

about six or seven francs; for although paste, it was, nevertheless, of very fine workmanship.

He put it in his pocket and started out for the Ministry, following the Boulevards in search of a jeweler's shop. He entered the first one he saw; feeling a little ashamed to expose his poverty, and also to offer such a worthless article for sale.

"Sir," said he to the merchant, "I would like to know what this is worth."

The man took the necklace, examined it, turned it over, weighed it, used his magnifying glass, called his clerk and made some remarks in an undertone; then he put the ornament back on the counter, and looked at it from a distance to judge of the effect.

M. Lantin was annoyed by all this ritual and was on the point of saying: "Oh! I know well enough it is not worth anything," when the jeweler said: "Sir, that necklace is worth from twelve to fifteen thousand francs; but I could not buy it unless you tell me exactly where it comes from."

The widower opened his eyes wide and remained gaping, unable to grasp the merchant's meaning. Finally he stammered: "You say — are you sure?" The other replied dryly: "You can look elsewhere and see if any one will offer you more. I consider it worth fifteen thousand at the most. Come back here if you cannot do better."

M. Lantin, gaping with astonishment, took up the necklace and went out, in obedience to a vague desire to be alone and to think.

Once outside, he felt inclined to laugh, and said to himself: "The idiot! Had I only taken him at his

word! That jeweler cannot distinguish real diamonds from paste."

A few minutes after, he entered another store in the Rue de la Paix. As soon as the proprietor glanced at the necklace, he cried out:

"Ah, *parbleu!* I know it well; it was bought here."

M. Lantin was disturbed, and asked:

"How much is it worth?"

"Well, I sold it for twenty-five thousand francs. I am willing to take it back for eighteen thousand when you inform me, according to our legal formality, how it comes to be in your possession."

This time M. Lantin sat down, paralysed with astonishment. He replied:

"But — but — examine it well. Until this moment I was under the impression that it was paste."

Said the jeweler:

"What is your name, sir?"

"Lantin — I am a clerk in the Ministry of the Interior. I live at No. 16 Rue des Martyrs."

The merchant opened his books, looked through them and said: "That necklace was sent to Mme. Lantin's address, 16 Rue des Martyrs, July 20, 1876."

The two men looked into each other's eyes — the widower speechless with astonishment, the jeweler scenting a thief. The latter broke the silence by saying:

"Will you leave this necklace here for twenty-four hours? I will give you a receipt."

"Certainly," answered M. Lantin, hastily. Then, putting the ticket in his pocket, he went out.

He crossed the street, walked up it again, saw

that he had taken the wrong way, went down again to the Tuileries Gardens, crossed the Seine, noticed he had again gone wrong, and returned to the Champs Élysées, his mind a complete blank. He tried to argue it out, to understand. His wife could not afford to purchase such a costly ornament. Certainly not. But, then, it must have been a present! — a present! — a present from whom? Why was it given her?

He stopped and remained standing in the middle of the avenue. A horrible doubt entered his mind — she? Then all the other gems must have been presents, too! The earth seemed to tremble beneath him — the tree before him was falling — throwing up his arms, he fell to the ground, unconscious. He recovered his senses in a pharmacy into which the passers-by had taken him.

He told them to take him home, where he shut himself up in his room. He wept until nightfall, biting a handkerchief so as not to shriek. Finally, overcome with grief and fatigue, he threw himself on the bed, where he slept heavily.

A ray of sunlight awoke him and he arose and prepared to go to the office. It was hard to work after such a shock. He sent a letter to his chief requesting to be excused. Then he remembered that he had to return to the jeweler's. He was filled with shame, and remained sunk in thought for a long time, but he could not leave the necklace with that man. So he dressed and went out.

It was a lovely day; a clear blue sky spread over the smiling city. Strollers with nothing to do were walking about with their hands in their pockets.

Observing them, Lantin said to himself: "The rich, indeed, are happy. With money it is possible to forget even the deepest sorrow. One can go where one pleases; one can travel and forget. Oh! if I were only rich!"

He began to feel hungry, but his pocket was empty. He again remembered the necklace. Eighteen thousand francs! Eighteen thousand francs! What a sum!

He soon arrived in the Rue de la Paix, and walked up and down opposite the jeweler's. Eighteen thousand francs! Twenty times he almost went in, but shame kept him back. He was hungry, however, — very hungry, and had not a cent in his pocket. He decided quickly, ran across the street in order not to have time for reflection, and entered the shop.

As soon as he saw him the proprietor came forward, and politely offered him a chair; even the clerks came and looked in his direction, with a knowing smile about their eyes and lips.

"I have made inquiries," said the jeweler, "and if you are still resolved to dispose of the gems, I am ready to pay you the price I offered."

"Certainly," stammered M. Lantin.

Whereupon the proprietor took from a drawer eighteen large bills, counted and handed them to Lantin, who signed a receipt and with a trembling hand put the money into his pocket.

As he was about to leave the store, he turned toward the merchant, who still wore the same smile, and lowering his eyes, said:

"I have — I have other gems which I have in-

herited from the same person. Will you buy them also?"

The merchant bowed: "Certainly, sir."

One of the clerks retired, unable to contain his laughter. Another blew his nose violently.

Lantin, impassive, blushing and serious, replied: "I will bring them to you."

He took a cab to go and fetch the jewels. An hour later, when he returned to the shop, he had not yet breakfasted. They began to examine each item separately, estimating the value of every one. Almost all of them had been bought there. Lantin now began to argue about the valuations, lost his temper, and insisted upon seeing the records of the sales. He became more domineering as the figures increased.

The large diamond earrings were worth twenty thousand francs; the bracelets, thirty-five thousand; the rings, brooches and medallions, sixteen thousand; a set of emeralds and sapphires, fourteen thousand; a gold chain with solitaire pendant, in the form of a necklace, forty thousand — making a total sum of one hundred and ninety-six thousand francs.

The jeweler remarked jokingly:

"These come from some one who invested all her savings in precious stones."

M. Lantin replied, seriously:

"It is as good a way as any other of investing one's money."

And he went off after having arranged with the purchaser to have another expert's opinion the next day.

When he got to the street he looked at the Colonne

Vendôme and felt tempted to climb it, as if it were a greasy pole. He felt so happy he could have played leap-frog with the statue of the Emperor, perched up there in the sky.

He lunched at Voisin's and drank wine at twenty francs a bottle. Then he hired a carriage and drove around the Bois, and as he scanned the various turnouts with a contemptuous air he could hardly refrain from crying out to the passers-by:

"I, too, am rich! — I am worth two hundred thousand francs."

Suddenly he thought of the Ministry. He drove up to the office, and deliberately entered the office of his chief, saying:

"Sir, I have come to resign my position. I have just inherited three hundred thousand francs."

He shook hands with his former colleagues and confided to them some of his projects for his new life; then he went off to dine at the Café Anglais.

Finding himself beside a gentleman of aristocratic bearing, he could not resist the desire to inform him, with some pride, that he had just inherited a fortune of four hundred thousand francs.

For the first time in his life he was not bored at the theatre, and spent the rest of the night with some women.

Six months afterwards he married again. His second wife was a very virtuous woman, but very cantankerous. She made him suffer a great deal.

AN APPARITION

WE WERE speaking of sequestration à propos of a recent lawsuit. It was at the close of an evening amongst friends, at an old house in the Rue de Grenelle, and each of us had a story to tell, a story alleged to be true. Then, the old Marquis de la Tour Samuel, who was eighty-two, rose, and, leaning on the mantelpiece, said, in somewhat shaky tones:

"I also know something strange, so strange that it has been an obsession all my life. It is now fifty-six years since the incident occurred, and yet not a month has passed in which I have not seen it again in a dream. The mark, the imprint of fear, if you can understand me, has remained with me ever since that day. For ten minutes I experienced such horrible fright that, ever since, a sort of constant terror is in my soul. Unexpected noises make me shudder to the bottom of my soul and objects half-seen in the gloom of night inspire me with a mad desire to take flight. In short, at night I am afraid.

"Ah, no! I would not have admitted that before having reached my present age! Now I can say anything. At eighty-two years of age, I do not feel compelled to be brave in the presence of imaginary dangers. I have never receded before real danger.

"The affair upset me so completely, and caused me such deep and mysterious and terrible distress, that I never spoke of it to any one. I have kept it down in the depths of my being, in those depths where painful secrets are kept, the shameful secrets and all the unconfessed weaknesses of our lives. I will now tell it to you exactly as it happened, without any attempt at explanation. There is no doubt it can be explained, unless I was mad at the time. But I was not mad, and I will prove it. You may think what you like. Here are the simple facts:

"It was in 1827, in the month of July. I was stationed at Rouen. One day, as I was walking along the quay, I met a man whom I thought I recognized, without being able to recall exactly who he was. Instinctively, I made a movement to stop; the stranger perceived it, looked at me, and fell into my arms.

"He was a friend of my youth to whom I had been deeply attached. For five years I had not seen him, and he seemed to have aged half a century. His hair was quite white, and he walked with a stoop as though completely worn out. He understood my surprise, and told me his life. A misfortune had shattered it.

"Having fallen madly in love with a young girl, he had married her, but, after a year of superhuman happiness and of passionate love, she died suddenly of heart failure, of love, very probably. He had left his château on the very day of her burial and had come to live in his house at Rouen. There he lived, desperate and solitary, consumed by grief, and so miserable that he thought only of suicide.

"'Now that I have found you again,' said he, 'I will ask you to render me an important service, to go to my old home and get for me, from the desk of my bedroom — our bedroom — some papers which I greatly need. I cannot send a servant or a lawyer, as complete discretion and absolute silence are necessary. As for myself, nothing on earth would induce me to re-enter that house. I will give you the key of the room, which I myself locked on leaving, and the key of my desk — also a note to my gardener, telling him to open the château for you. But come and breakfast with me to-morrow, and we will arrange all that.'

"I promised to do him the slight favour he asked. For that matter, it was nothing of a trip, his property being but a few miles distant from Rouen and easily reached in an hour on horseback.

"At ten o'clock the following day I was at his house, and we breakfasted alone together, but he scarcely spoke.

"He begged me to pardon him; the thought of the visit I was about to make to that room, the scene of his dead happiness, overwhelmed him, he said. He, indeed, seemed singularly agitated and preoccupied, as though some mysterious struggle were taking place in his soul.

"At last, he explained to me exactly what I had to do. It was very simple. I was to take two packages of letters and a roll of papers from the first drawer on the right of the desk of which I had the key. He added, 'I need not beg you to refrain from glancing at them.'

"I was wounded at that remark, and told him so

somewhat sharply. He stammered, 'Forgive me, I suffer so,' and he began to weep.

"I took leave of him about one o'clock to accomplish my mission.

"The weather was glorious, and I cantered over the fields, listening to the songs of the larks and the rhythmical striking of my sword against my boot. Then I entered the forest and walked my horse. Branches of trees caressed my face as I passed, and, now and then, I caught a leaf with my teeth, and chewed it greedily, from that sheer joy of living which inexplicably fills one with a sense of tumultuous, impalpable happiness, a sort of intoxication of strength.

"As I approached the château, I looked in my pocket for the letter I had for the gardener, and was astonished at finding it sealed. I was so surprised and irritated that I was about to turn back without having fulfilled my promise but thought that I should thereby display undue susceptibility. My friend might easily have closed the envelope without noticing that he did so, in his troubled state of mind.

"The manor seemed to have been abandoned for twenty years. The gate was open and in such a state of decay that one wondered how it stood upright; the paths were overgrown with grass, and the flower beds were no longer distinguishable from the lawn.

"The noise I made by tapping loudly on a shutter brought an old man from a side door, who seemed stunned with astonishment at seeing me. On receiving my letter, he read it, re-read it, turned it

over and over, looked me up and down, put the paper in his pocket, and finally asked:

"'Well! what is it you want?'

"I replied shortly: 'You ought to know, since you have just read your master's orders. I wish to enter the château.'

"He seemed overcome. 'Then you are going into . . . into her room?'

"I began to lose patience: 'See here! Do you propose to cross-examine me?'

"He stammered in confusion: 'No — sir — but it is because — that is, it has not been opened since — since the — death. If you will be kind enough to wait for five minutes, I will go to — to see if —'

"I interrupted him, angrily: 'Look here, what are you driving at? You cannot enter the room, since I have the key!'

"He had no more to say. 'Then, sir, I will show you the way.'

"'Show me the staircase and leave me. I'll find my way without you.'

"'But — sir — indeed —'

"This time I became really angry: 'Now be quiet or you'll know the reason why.' I pushed him aside, and went into the house.

"I first went through the kitchen; then two rooms occupied by the servant and his wife; next, by a wide hall, I reached the stairs, which I mounted, and recognized the door indicated by my friend.

"I easily opened it and entered. The apartment was so dark that, at first, I could distinguish nothing. I stopped short, my nostrils penetrated by the disagreeable, mouldy odour of unoccupied rooms, of

dead rooms. Then, as my eyes slowly became accustomed to the darkness, I saw plainly enough, a large and disordered bedroom, the bed without sheets, but still retaining its mattresses and pillows, on one of which was a deep impression of an elbow or a head, as though some one had recently rested there.

"The chairs all seemed out of place. I noticed that a door, doubtless that of a closet, had remained half open.

"I first went to the window, which I opened to let in the light; but the fastenings of the shutters had grown so rusty that I could not move them. I even tried to break them with my sword, but without success. As I was growing irritated over my useless efforts, and could now see fairly well in the semi-obscurity, I renounced the idea of getting more light and went over to the writing-table.

"I sat down in an arm-chair, let down the lid of the desk and opened the drawer that had been indicated. It was full to the top. I needed only three packages, which I knew how to recognize, and began searching for them.

"I was straining my eyes in the effort to read the superscriptions, when I seemed to hear, or rather feel, something rustle behind me. I paid no attention, believing that a draught from the window was moving some drapery. But, in a minute or so, another movement, almost imperceptible, sent a strangely disagreeable little shiver over my skin. It was so stupid to be affected, even slightly, that self-respect prevented my turning around. I had then found the second packet I needed and was about to

lay my hand on the third when a long and painful sigh, uttered just over my shoulder, made me bound like a madman from my seat and land several feet away. As I jumped I had turned about, my hand on the hilt of my sword, and, truly, had I not felt it at my side, I should have taken to my heels like a coward.

"A tall woman, dressed in white, stood gazing at me from the back of the chair where I had been sitting an instant before.

"Such a shudder ran through all my limbs that I nearly fell backward. No one can understand unless he has felt it, that frightful, unreasoning terror! The mind becomes vague; the heart ceases to beat; the entire body grows as limp as a sponge, as if one's life were ebbing away.

"I do not believe in ghosts, nevertheless I completely gave way to a hideous fear of the dead; and I suffered more in those few moments than in all the rest of my life, from the irresistible anguish of supernatural fright. If she had not spoken, I should have died, perhaps! But she spoke, she spoke in a sweet, sad voice, that set my nerves vibrating. I dare not say that I became master of myself and recovered my reason. No! I was so frightened that I scarcely knew what I was doing; but a certain innate pride, a remnant of soldierly instinct, made me, almost in spite of myself, maintain a creditable countenance. I was posing to myself, I suppose, and to her, whoever she was, woman or ghost. Afterwards I realized all this, for I assure you that, at the time of the apparition, I thought of nothing. I was afraid.

"She said: 'Oh! sir, you can render me a great service.'

"I tried to reply, but it was impossible for me to pronounce a word. Only a vague sound came from my throat.

"She continued: 'Will you? You can save me, cure me. I suffer frightfully. I suffer, oh! how I suffer!' and she slowly seated herself in my arm-chair.

"'Will you?' she said, looking at me.

"I replied 'Yes' by a nod, my voice still being paralysed.

"Then she held out to me a tortoise-shell comb, and murmured:

"'Comb my hair, oh! comb my hair; that will cure me; it must be combed. Look at my head — how I suffer; and my hair hurts me so!'

"Her hair, unbound, very long and very black, it seemed to me, hung over the back of the chair and touched the floor.

"Why did I receive that comb with a shudder, and why did I take in my hands the long, black hair which gave to my skin a gruesome, cold sensation, as though I were handling snakes? I cannot tell.

"That sensation has remained in my fingers and I still tremble when I think of it.

"I combed her hair. I handled, I know not how, those icy locks. I twisted, knotted, and loosened them. She sighed and bowed her head, seeming to be happy. Suddenly she said: 'Thank you!' snatched the comb from my hands, and fled by the door that I had noticed ajar.

"Left alone, I experienced for several seconds the frightened agitation of one who awakens from a

nightmare. At length I regained my full senses; I ran to the window, and with a mighty effort burst open the shutters, letting a flood of light into the room. Immediately I sprang to the door by which she had departed. I found it closed and immovable!

"Then a mad desire to flee came on me like a panic, the panic which soldiers know in battle. I seized the three packets of letters on the open desk; ran from the room, dashed down the stairs four steps at a time, found myself outside, I know not how, and seeing my horse a few steps off, leaped into the saddle and galloped away.

"I stopped only when I reached Rouen and my own house. Throwing the bridle to my orderly, I fled to my room, where I shut myself in to think.

"For an hour I anxiously wondered whether I had not been the victim of a hallucination. Surely I had had one of those incomprehensible nervous shocks, one of those mental frights which give rise to miracles, to which the Supernatural owes its power.

"I was about to believe I had seen a vision, had a hallucination, when I approached the window. My eyes fell, by chance, upon my breast. My military cape was covered with hairs; the long hairs of a woman, which had got caught in the buttons! One by one, with trembling fingers, I plucked them off and threw them away.

"I then called my orderly. I was too disturbed, too upset to go and see my friend that day, and I also wished to reflect more fully upon what I ought to tell him. I sent him his letters, for which he gave the soldier a receipt. He asked after me most particularly. He was told I was ill, that I had

had sunstroke or something. He seemed to be exceedingly anxious. Next morning at dawn I went to him, determined to tell him the truth. He had gone out the evening before and had not yet returned. I called again during the day; my friend was still absent. I waited for a week. He did not appear. Then I notified the authorities. A search was instituted, but not the slightest trace of his whereabouts or manner of disappearance was discovered.

"A minute inspection was made of the abandoned château. Nothing of a suspicious character was discovered. There was no indication that a woman had been concealed there.

"The inquiry led to nothing, and the search was stopped, and for fifty-six years I have heard nothing; I know no more than before."

THE DOOR

"AH!" exclaimed Karl Massouligny, "the question of complaisant husbands is a difficult one. I have seen many kinds, and yet I am unable to give an opinion about any of them. I have often tried to determine whether they are blind, weak, or clairvoyant. I believe that there are some who belong to each of these categories.

"Let us quickly pass over the blind ones. They cannot rightly be called complaisant, since they do not know, but they are good creatures who cannot see farther than their noses. It is a curious and interesting thing to notice the ease with which men — all men, and even women, all women — can be deceived. We are taken in by the slightest trick of those about us — of our children, our friends, our servants, our tradespeople. Human nature is credulous, and in order to suspect, guess and overcome the deceit of others, we do not display one-tenth of the finesse which we use when we, in turn, wish to deceive some one else.

"The clairvoyant husbands can be divided into three classes. Those who have some interest, pecuniary, ambitious or otherwise, in their wife's having a lover, or lovers. These ask only that appearances be observed more or less, and they are satisfied. Next come those who get angry. What

a beautiful novel one could write about them! Finally the weak ones! Those who are afraid of scandal.

"There are also those who are powerless, or, rather, tired, who escape the conjugal bed from fear of ataxia or apoplexy, who are satisfied to see a friend run these risks.

"But I have met a husband of a rare species, who guarded against the common accident in a strange and witty manner.

"In Paris I had made the acquaintance of an elegant, fashionable couple very much in demand. The woman, nervous, tall, slender, courted, was supposed to have had many adventures. She pleased me with her wit, and I believe that I pleased her, also. I courted her, a trial courting to which she answered with evident provocations. Soon we arrived at tender glances, pressures of the hands, all the little gallantries which precede the great attack.

"Nevertheless, I hesitated. I believe that, as a rule, the majority of society intrigues, however short they may be, are not worth the trouble which they give us and the difficulties which may arise. I therefore mentally compared the advantages and disadvantages which I could expect, and I thought I noticed that the husband suspected me and was watching me.

"One evening, at a ball, as I was saying tender things to the young woman in a little room leading from the big hall where the dancing was going on, I noticed in a mirror the reflection of some one who was watching us. It was he. Our looks met, and then I saw him turn his head and walk away.

"I murmured: 'Your husband is spying on us.'

"She seemed dumbfounded, and asked: 'My husband?'

"'Yes, he has been watching us for some time.'

"'Nonsense! Are you sure?'

"'Very sure.'

"'How strange! On the contrary, he is usually very pleasant to all my friends.'

"'Perhaps he guessed that I love you!'

"'Nonsense! You are not the first one to pay attention to me. Every woman who is a little in view drags behind her a troop of admirers.'

"'Yes. But I love you deeply.'

"'Admitting that that is true, does a husband ever guess those things?'

"'Then he is not jealous?'

"'No — no!'

"She thought for an instant, and then continued: 'No. I do not think that I ever noticed any jealousy on his part.'

"'Has he never — watched you?'

"'No. As I said, he is always agreeable to my friends.'

"From that day my courting became much more assiduous. The woman did not please me any more than before, but the probable jealousy of her husband tempted me greatly.

"As for her, I judged her coolly and clearly. She had a certain worldly charm, due to a quick, gay, amiable, and superficial mind, but no real, deep attraction. She was, as I have already said, nervous, all on the surface and very elegant. How can

I explain myself? She was . . . a decoration, not a home.

"One day, after taking dinner with her, her husband said to me, just as I was leaving: 'My dear friend' (he now called me 'friend'), 'we soon leave for the country. It is a great pleasure for my wife and myself to receive the people whom we like. We would like to have you spend a month with us. It would be very nice of you to do so.'

"I was dumbfounded, but I accepted.

"A month later I arrived at their estate of Vertcresson, in Touraine. They were waiting for me at the station, two miles from the château. There were three of them, she, the husband, and a gentleman unknown to me, the Comte de Morterade, to whom I was introduced. He appeared to be delighted to make my acquaintance, and the strangest ideas passed through my mind while we trotted along the beautiful road between two hedges of green. I was saying to myself: 'Let's see, what can this mean? Here is a husband who cannot doubt that his wife and I are on more than friendly terms, and yet he invites me to his house, receives me like an old friend, and seems to say: Go ahead, my friend, the road is clear!'

"Then I am introduced to a very pleasant gentleman, who seems already to have settled down in the house, and . . . and who is perhaps trying to get out of it, and who seems as pleased at my arrival as the husband himself.

"Is it some former lover who wishes to retire? One might think so. But, then, would these two men tacitly have come to one of those infamous lit-

tle arrangements so common in society? And without consulting me, it is proposed that I shall quietly enter into the association and take up the succession. All hands and arms are held out to me. All doors and hearts are open to me.

"And she? An enigma. She cannot be ignorant of everything. However? . . . however? . . . there it is . . . I am quite at sea!

"The dinner was very gay and friendly. On leaving the table the husband and his friend began to play cards, while I went out on the steps to look at the moonlight with Madame. She seemed to be greatly moved by nature, and I judged that the moment of my happiness was near. That evening she was really delightful. The country seemed to make her more tender, or rather more languishing. Her long, slender figure looked pretty on this stone step beside a great vase in which grew some flowers. I felt like taking her out under the trees, throwing myself at her feet, and speaking to her words of love.

"Her husband's voice called: 'Louise?'

"'Yes, my dear.'

"'You are forgetting the tea.'

"'I am coming, dear.'

"We returned to the house, and she served tea. The two men, having finished their game of cards, were obviously sleepy. We had to go to our rooms. I did not get to sleep till late, and then I slept badly.

"An excursion was decided upon for the following afternoon, and we went in an open carriage to

visit some ruins. She and I were in the back of the vehicle and they were opposite us, with their backs to the driver. The conversation was animated, agreeable and unconstrained. I am an orphan, and it seemed to me as though I had just found my family, I felt so much at home with them.

"Suddenly, as she had stretched out her foot between her husband's legs, he murmured reproachfully: 'Louise, please don't use up your old shoes yourself. There is no reason for being neater in Paris than in the country.'

"I looked down. She was indeed wearing worn-out shoes, and I noticed that her stockings were not pulled up tightly.

"She had blushed and hidden her foot under her dress. The friend was looking out in the distance, with an indifferent and unconcerned look.

"The husband offered me a cigar, which I accepted. For a few days it was impossible for me to be alone with her for two minutes; he was with us everywhere. He was delightful to me.

"One morning he came to get me to take a walk before lunch, and the conversation happened to turn on marriage. I spoke a little about solitude, and about how charming life can be made by a woman. Suddenly he interrupted me, saying: 'My boy, don't talk about things you know nothing about. A woman who has no further reason for loving you will not love you for long. All the little coquetries which make them so exquisite when they do not definitely belong to us cease as soon as they become ours. And then . . . the respectable women . . . that is to say, our wives . . . are

. . . are not . . . they lack . . . do not understand their business as women. Do you understand?'

"He said no more, and I could not exactly guess his thoughts.

"Two days after this conversation he called me to his room quite early in order to show me a collection of engravings. I sat in an easy-chair opposite the big door which separated his apartment from his wife's, and behind this door I heard some one walking and moving, and I was thinking very little of the engravings, although I kept exclaiming: 'Oh, charming! delightful! exquisite!'

"He suddenly said: 'Oh, I have a beautiful specimen in the next room. I'll go get it.'

"He ran to the door quickly, and both sides opened as though for a theatrical effect.

"In a large room, all in disorder, in the midst of skirts, collars, blouses lying around on the floor, stood a tall, dried-up creature with her hair hanging. The lower part of her body was covered with an old, worn-out silk petticoat, which clung about her thin hips, and she was standing in front of a mirror brushing some short, sparse blond hairs. Her arms formed two acute angles, and as she turned around in astonishment I saw under a common linen chemise a regular cemetery of ribs, which were hidden from the public gaze by cotton pads.

"The husband naturally uttered an exclamation, and came back, closing the doors, and said with a heartbroken air: 'Gracious! how stupid I am! Oh, how thoughtless! My wife will never forgive me for that!'

"I already felt like thanking him. I left three days later, after cordially shaking hands with the two men and kissing the lady's fingers; she bade me a cold good-bye."

. . . . . .

Karl Massouligny was silent. Some one asked: "But what was the friend?"

"I don't know . . . however . . . however, he looked greatly distressed to see me leaving so soon."

THE FATHER

JEAN DE VALNOIX is a friend of mine whom I visit from time to time. He lives in a little house in the woods at the edge of a river. He retired from Paris after leading a wild life for fifteen years. Suddenly he had enough of pleasures, dinners, men, women, cards, everything; and he came to live in this little place where he had been born.

There are two or three of us who go, from time to time, to spend a fortnight or three weeks with him. He is certainly delighted to see us when we arrive, and pleased to be alone again when we leave. So I went to see him last week, and he received me with open arms. We would spend the time, sometimes together, sometimes alone. Usually he reads and I work during the day-time, and every evening we talk until midnight.

Well, last Tuesday, after a scorching day, towards nine o'clock in the evening we were both of us sitting and watching the water flow at our feet; we were exchanging very vague ideas about the stars which were bathing in the current and which seemed to swim along ahead of us. Our ideas were very vague, confused, and brief, for our minds are very limited, weak, and powerless. I was growing sentimental about the sun, which dies in the Great Bear. One can only see it on very clear nights, it is so pale. When the sky is the least bit clouded it

disappears. We were thinking of the creatures which people these worlds, of their possible forms, of their unthinkable faculties and unknown organs, of the animals and plants of every kind, of all the kingdoms and forms of matter, of all the things which man's dreams can barely touch.

Suddenly a voice called from the distance: "Monsieur, Monsieur!"

Jean answered: "Here I am, Baptiste!"

When the servant had found us he announced: "It's Monsieur's gipsy."

My friend burst out laughing, a thing which he rarely did, then he asked: "Is to-day the nineteenth of July?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Very well. Tell her to wait for me. Give her some supper. I'll see her in ten minutes."

When the man had disappeared my friend took me by the arm saying: "Let us walk along slowly, while I tell you this story.

"Seven years ago, when I arrived here, I went out one evening to take a walk in the forest. It was a beautiful day, like to-day, and I was walking along slowly under the great trees, looking at the stars through the leaves, drinking in the quiet restfulness of night and the forest.

"I had just left Paris forever. I was tired out, more disgusted than I can say by all the foolish, low, and nasty things which I had seen and in which I had participated for fifteen years.

"I walked along for a great distance in this deep forest, following a path which leads to the village of Crouzille, about ten miles from here.

"Suddenly my dog, Bock, a great Saint-Germain, which never left me, stopped short and began to growl. I thought that perhaps a fox, a wolf, or a boar might be in the neighbourhood; I advanced gently on tiptoe, in order to make no noise, but suddenly I heard mournful human cries, plaintive, muffled and moving.

"Surely some murder was being committed. I rushed forward, taking a tight grip on my heavy oak cane, a regular club.

"I was coming nearer to the moans, which now became more distinct, but strangely muffled. They seemed to be coming from some house, perhaps from the hut of some charcoal burner. Three feet ahead of me Bock was running, stopping, barking, starting again, very excited, and growling all the time. Suddenly another dog, a big black one with burning eyes, barred our progress. I could clearly see his white fangs, which seemed to be shining in his mouth.

"I ran towards him with uplifted stick, but Bock had already jumped, and the two beasts were rolling on the ground with their teeth buried in each other. I went past them and almost bumped into a horse lying in the road. As I stopped, in surprise, to examine the animal, I saw in front of me a wagon, or, rather, a caravan, such as are inhabited by circus people and the itinerant merchants who go from fair to fair.

"The cries were coming from there, frightful and continuous. As the door opened on the other side I turned around this vehicle and rushed up the three wooden steps, ready to jump on the malefactor.

"What I saw seemed so strange to me that I could not understand it at first. A man was kneeling, and seemed to be praying, while in the only bed something impossible to recognize, a half-naked creature, whose face I could not see, was moving, twisting about, and howling. It was a woman in labour.

"As soon as I understood the kind of accident which was the cause of these screams, I made my presence known, and the man, wild with grief, and apparently from the neighbourhood of Marseilles, begged me to save him, to save her, promising me with many words an incredible gratitude. I had never seen a birth; I had never helped a female creature, woman, dog, or cat, in such a circumstance, and I naïvely said so, as I stupidly watched this thing which was screaming so in the bed.

"Then when I had gathered my wits again, I asked the grief-stricken man why he did not go to the next village. His horse must have caught in a rut and had broken his leg.

"'Well, my man,' I exclaimed, 'there are two of us now, and we will drag your wife to my house.'

"But the howling dogs forced us to go outside, and we had to separate them by beating them with our sticks, at the risk of killing them. Then the idea struck me to harness them with us, one to the right and the other to the left, in order to help us. In ten minutes everything was ready, and the wagon started forward slowly, shaking the poor, suffering woman each time it bumped over the deep ruts.

"Such a road, my friend! We were going along,

panting, groaning, perspiring, slipping, and falling, while our poor dogs puffed along beside us.

"It took three hours to reach the cottage. When we arrived before the door the cries from the wagon had ceased. Mother and child were doing well.

"They were put to bed, and then I had a horse harnessed up in order to go for a physician, while the man, an inhabitant of Marseilles, reassured, consoled, and triumphant, was stuffing himself with food and getting dead drunk in order to celebrate this happy birth.

"It was a girl.

"I kept these people with me for a week. The mother, Mademoiselle Elmire, was an extraordinarily lucid fortune-teller, who promised me an interminable life and countless joys.

"The following year, on exactly the same day, towards nightfall, the servant who has just called me came to me in the smoking-room after dinner and said: 'It's the gipsy of last year who has come to thank Monsieur.'

"I had her come into the house, and I was dumbfounded when I saw beside her a tall blond fellow, a man from the North, who bowed and spoke to me as chief of the community. He had heard of my kindness to Mademoiselle Elmire, and he had not wished to let this anniversary go by without bringing to me their thanks and a testimony of their gratitude.

"I gave them supper in the kitchen, and offered them my hospitality for the night. They left the following day.

"The woman returns every year at the same date

with the child, a fine little girl, and a new . . . lord and master each time. One man only, a fellow from Auvergne, who thanked me in his strange accent, came back two years in succession. The little girl calls them all 'Papa,' just as one says 'Monsieur' with us."

We were arriving at the house, and we could barely distinguish three shadows standing on the steps, waiting for us. The tallest one took a few steps forward, made a great bow, and said: "Monsieur le Comte, we have come to-day in recognition of our gratefulness. . . ."

He was a Belgian!

After him, the little one spoke in the shrill, singing voice which children use when they recite a compliment.

I appeared to know nothing, and I took Mademoiselle Elmire to one side, and, after a few questions, I asked her: "Is that the father of your child?"

"Oh! no, Monsieur."

"Is the father dead?"

"Oh! no, Monsieur. We still see each other from time to time. He is a gendarme."

"What! then it wasn't the fellow from Marseilles who was there at the birth?"

"Oh! no, Monsieur. That was a rascal who stole all my savings."

"And the gendarme, the real father, does he know his child?"

"Oh! yes, Monsieur, and he loves her very much; but he can't take care of her because he has others by his wife."

OUR LETTERS

NIGHT hours in the train induce sleep in some and insomnia in others. With me, any journey prevents my sleeping on the following night.

I had arrived, about five o'clock, at the estate of Abelle, which belongs to my friends, the Murets d'Artus, to spend three weeks there. It is a pretty house, built by one of their grandfathers in the latter half of the last century, and it has remained in the family. Therefore it has that intimate character of dwellings that have always been inhabited, furnished, animated and enlivened by the same people. Nothing changes; none of the soul evaporates from the dwelling, in which the furniture has never been moved, the tapestries never taken down, and have become worn out, faded, discoloured, on the same walls. None of the old furniture leaves the place; only from time to time it is moved a little to make room for a new piece, which enters there like a new-born infant in the midst of brothers and sisters.

The house is on a hill in the centre of a park which slopes down to the river, where there is a little stone bridge. Beyond the water the fields stretch out in the distance, where cows wander slowly, pasturing on the moist grass; their humid

eyes seem full of the dew, mist and freshness of the pasture. I love this dwelling, just as one loves a thing which one ardently desires to possess. I return here every autumn with infinite delight; I leave with regret.

After I had dined with this friendly family, by whom I was received like a relative, I asked my chum, Paul Muret: "Which room did you give me this year?"

"Aunt Rose's room."

An hour later, followed by her three children, two tall little girls and a great lump of a boy, Madame Muret d'Artus installed me in Aunt Rose's room, where I had not yet slept.

When I was alone I examined the walls, the furniture, the general aspect of the room, in order to attune my mind to it. I knew it, but not very well, as I had entered it only once or twice, and I looked indifferently at a pastel portrait of Aunt Rose, who gave her name to the room.

This old Aunt Rose, with her hair in curls, looking at me from behind the glass, made very little impression on my mind. She looked to me like a woman of former days, with principles and precepts, as strong on the maxims of morality as on cooking recipes, one of these old aunts who are a wet blanket on gaiety and the stern and wrinkled angel of provincial families.

I never had heard her spoken of; I knew nothing of her life or of her death. Did she belong to this century or to the preceding one? Had she left this earth after a calm or a stormy existence? Had she

given up to heaven the pure soul of an old maid, the calm soul of a spouse, the tender one of a mother, or one moved by love? What difference did it make? The name alone, "Aunt Rose," seemed ridiculous, common, ugly.

I picked up a candle and looked at her severe face, hanging far up in an old gilt frame. Then, as I found it insignificant, disagreeable, even unsympathetic, I began to examine the furniture. It dated from the period of Louis XVI., the Revolution and the Directoire. Not a chair, not a curtain had entered this room since then, and it gave out the subtle odour of memories, which is the combined odour of wood, cloth, chairs, hangings, peculiar to places wherein have lived hearts that have loved and suffered.

I retired but did not sleep. After I had tossed about for an hour or two, I decided to get up and write some letters.

I opened a little mahogany desk with brass trimmings, which was placed between the two windows, in hope of finding some ink and paper; but all I found was a quill-pen, very much worn, made of a porcupine's quill, and chewed at the end. I was about to close this piece of furniture, when a shining spot attracted my attention: it looked like the yellow head of a nail, and it formed a little round lump at the corner of a tray. I scratched it with my finger, and it seemed to move. I seized it between two finger-nails, and pulled as hard as I could. It came toward me gently. It was a long gold pin which had been slipped into a hole in the wood and remained hidden there.

Why? I immediately thought that it must have served to work some spring which hid a secret, and I looked. It took a long time. After at least two hours of investigation, I discovered another hole opposite the first one, but at the bottom of a groove. Into this I stuck my pin: a little shelf sprang up in my face, and I saw two packages of yellow letters, tied with a blue ribbon.

I read them. Here are two of them:

So you wish me to return to you your letters, my dearest. Here they are, but it pains me to obey. Of what are you afraid? That I might lose them? But they are under lock and key. Do you fear that they might be stolen? I guard against that, for they are my dearest treasure.

Yes, it pains me deeply. I wondered whether, perhaps, you might not be feeling some regret at the bottom of your heart? Not regret at having loved me, for I know that you still do, but regret at having expressed on white paper this living love in hours when your heart did not confide in me, but in the pen you held in your hand. When we love, we have need of confession, need of talking or writing, and we either talk or write. Words fly away, those sweet words made of music, air and tenderness, warm and light, which escape as soon as they are uttered, which remain in the memory alone, but which one can neither see, touch nor kiss, like the words written by your hand. Your letters? Yes, I am returning them to you! But with what sorrow!

Undoubtedly, you must have had an after-thought of delicate shame at expressions that are ineffaceable. In your sensitive and timid soul, which can be hurt by an impalpable shade, you must have regretted having written to a man that you loved him. You remembered sen-

tences that called up recollections, and you said to yourself: "I will make ashes of those words."

Be satisfied, be calm. Here are your letters. I love you.

My Friend:

No, you have not understood me, you have not guessed. I do not regret, and I never shall, that I told you of my affection. I will always write to you, but you must return my letters to me as soon as you have read them.

I shall shock you, dear, when I tell you the reason for this demand. It is not poetic, as you imagined, but practical. I am afraid, not of you, but of some mischance. I am guilty. I do not wish my fault to affect others than myself.

Understand me well. You and I may both die. You might fall off your horse, since you ride every day; you might die from a sudden attack, from a duel, from heart disease, from a carriage accident, in a thousand ways. For, if there is only one death, there are more ways of its reaching us than there are days for us to live.

Then your sisters, your brother, or your sister-in-law might find my letters! Do you think that they love me? I doubt it. And then, even if they adored me, is it possible for two women and one man to know a secret — such a secret! — and not to tell of it?

I seem to be saying something very dreadful by speaking first of your death, and then suspecting the discreetness of your relatives.

But don't all of us die sooner or later? And it is almost certain that one of us will precede the other under the ground. We must therefore foresee all dangers, even that one.

As for me, I will keep your letters beside mine, in the secret of my little desk. I will show them to you there,

sleeping side by side in their silken hiding place, full of our love, like lovers in a tomb.

You will say to me: "But if you should die first, my dear, your husband will find these letters."

Oh! I fear nothing. First of all, he does not know the secret of my desk, and he will not look for it. And even if he finds it after my death, I fear nothing.

Did you ever stop to think of all the love letters that have been found in the drawers of dead women? I have been thinking of this for a long time, and that is the reason I decided to ask you for my letters.

Think that never, do you understand, never, does a woman burn, tear or destroy the letters in which she is told that she is loved. That is our whole life, our whole hope, expectation and dream. These little pieces of paper which bear our name in caressing terms are relics, and we women have chapels, especially chapels in which we are the saints. Our love letters are our titles to beauty, grace, seduction, the intimate vanity of our womanhood; they are the treasures of our heart. No, a woman never destroys these secret and delicious archives of her life.

But, like everybody else, we die, and then — then these letters are found! Who finds them? The husband. Then what does he do? Nothing. He burns them.

Oh, I have thought a great deal about that! Just think that every day women are dying who have been loved; every day the traces and proofs of their fault fall into the hands of their husbands, and that there is never a scandal, never a duel.

Think, my dear, of what a man's heart is. He avenges himself on a living woman; he fights with the man who has dishonoured her, kills him while she lives, because, — well, why? I do not know exactly why. But if, after her death, he finds similar proofs, he burns them and no one is the wiser, and he continues to shake hands with the friend of the dead woman, and feels quite at ease that

these letters should not have fallen into strange hands, and that they are destroyed.

Oh, how many men I know among my friends who must have burned such proofs, and who pretend to know nothing, and yet who would have fought madly had they found them when she was still alive! But she is dead. Honour has changed. The grave gives absolution for conjugal sins.

Therefore, I can safely keep our letters, which, in your hands, would be a menace to both of us. Do you dare to say that I am not right?

I love you and kiss you. ROSE.

I raised my eyes to the portrait of Aunt Rose, and as I looked at her severe, wrinkled face, I thought of all those women's souls which we do not know, and which we suppose to be so different from what they really are, whose inborn and ingenuous craftiness we never can penetrate, their quiet duplicity; and a verse of Vigny returned to my memory:

"Toujours ce compagnon dont le cœur n'est pas sûr."

NIGHT

A NIGHTMARE

I LOVE night passionately. I love it as one loves one's country or one's mistress. I love it with all my senses, with my eyes which see it, with my sense of smell which inhales it, with my ears which listen to its silence, with my whole body which is caressed by its shadows. The larks sing in the sunlight, in the blue heavens, in the warm air, in the light air of clear mornings. The owl flies at night, a sombre patch passing through black space, and, rejoicing in the black immensity that intoxicates him, he utters a vibrant and sinister cry.

In the day-time I am tired and bored. The day is brutal and noisy. I rarely get up, I dress myself languidly and I go out regretfully. Every movement, every gesture, every word, every thought, tires me as though I were raising a crushing load.

But when the sun goes down a confused joy invades my whole being. I awaken and become animated. As the shadows lengthen I feel quite different, younger, stronger, more lively, happier. I watch the great soft shadows falling from the sky and growing deeper. They envelop the city like an impenetrable and impalpable wave; they hide, efface and destroy colours and forms; they embrace houses, people and buildings in their im-

perceptible grasp. Then I would like to cry out with joy like the screech-owls, to run upon the roofs like the cats, and an impetuous, invincible desire to love burns in my veins. I go, I walk, sometimes in the darkened outskirts of Paris, sometimes in the neighbouring woods, where I hear my sisters, the beasts, and my brothers, the poachers, prowling.

One is finally killed by what one violently loves. But how shall I explain what happens to me? How can I ever make people understand that I am able to tell it? I do not know, I cannot tell. I only know that this is — that is all.

Well, yesterday — was it yesterday? — Yes, no doubt, unless it was earlier, a day, a month, a year earlier . . . I do not know, but it must have been yesterday, because since then no day has risen, no sun has dawned. But how long has it been night? How long? Who can tell? Who will ever know?

Yesterday, then, I went out after dinner, as I do every evening. It was very fine, very mild, very warm. As I went down towards the boulevards I looked above my head at the black streams full of stars, outlined in the sky between the roofs of the houses, which were turning round and causing this rolling stream of stars to undulate like a real river.

Everything was distinct in the clear air, from the planets to the gas-light. So many lights were burning above, in the city, that the shadows seemed luminous. Bright nights are more joyful than days of bright sunshine. The cafés on the boulevard were flaring; people were laughing, passing up and down, drinking. I went into a theatre for a few moments. Into what theatre, I cannot tell. There

was so much light in there that I was depressed and I came out again with my heart saddened by the clash of brutal light on the gold of the balcony, by the factitious glitter of the great crystal chandelier, by the glaring footlights, by the melancholy of this artificial and crude light. I arrived at the Champs-Élysées, where the open-air concerts look like conflagrations in the branches. The chestnut trees, touched with yellow light, look as if they were painted, like phosphorescent trees. The electric bulbs, like pale dazzling moons, like eggs from the moon, fallen from heaven, like monstrous, living pearls, caused the streaks of gas-light, filthy, ugly gas-light and the garlands of coloured, lighted glasses to grow pale beneath their pearly, mysterious and regal light.

I stopped beneath the Arc de Triomphe to look at the Avenue, the long and wonderful, starry Avenue, leading to Paris between two rows of fire and the stars! The stars above, the unknown stars, thrown haphazard through infinity, where they form those strange shapes which make us dream and think so much.

I entered the Bois de Boulogne, where I remained for a long, long time. I was seized by a strange thrill, a powerful and unforeseen emotion, an exaltation of mind which bordered on frenzy. I walked on and on, and then I returned. What time was it when I passed again beneath the Arc de Triomphe? I do not know. The city was sleeping, and clouds, great black clouds, were slowly spreading over the sky.

For the first time I felt that something strange was going to happen, something new.

It seemed to be getting cold, that the air was becoming thicker, that night, my beloved night, was weighing heavily upon my heart. The Avenue was deserted now. Two solitary policemen were walking near the cab-stand, and a string of vegetable carts was going to the Halles along the roadway, scarcely lit by the gas jets, which seemed to be dying out. They moved along slowly, laden with carrots, turnips and cabbages. The invisible drivers were asleep, the horses were walking with an even step, following the carts in front of them, and making no noise on the wooden pavement. As they passed each lamp on the footpath, the carrots showed up red in the light; the turnips white, the cabbages green, and they passed one after another, these carts which were as red as fire, as white as silver and as green as emeralds. I followed them, then I turned into the Rue Royale and returned to the boulevards. There was nobody to be seen, none of the cafés was open and only a few belated pedestrians in a hurry. I had never seen Paris so dead and so deserted. I looked at my watch. It was two o'clock.

Some force was driving me, the desire to walk. So I went as far as the Bastille. There I became aware that I had never seen so dark a night, for I could not even see the Colonne de Juillet, whose Genius in gold was lost in the impenetrable obscurity. A curtain of clouds as dense as the ether had buried the stars and seemed to be descending upon the world to blot it out.

I retraced my steps. There was nobody about me. However, at the Place du Château d'Eau, a

drunken man almost bumped into me, then disappeared. For some time I could hear his sonorous and uneven steps. I went on. At the top of the Faubourg Montmartre a cab passed, going in the direction of the Seine. I hailed it but the driver did not reply. Near the Rue Drouot a woman was loitering: "Listen, dearie," — I hastened my steps to avoid her outstretched hand. Then there was nothing more. In front of the Vaudeville Theatre a rag-picker was searching in the gutter. His little lantern was moving just above the ground. I said to him: "What time is it, my good man?"

"How do I know?" he grumbled. "I have no watch."

Then I suddenly perceived that the lamps had all been extinguished. I know that at this time of year they are put out early, before dawn, for the sake of economy. But daylight was still far off, very far off indeed!

"Let us go to the Halles," I said to myself; "there at least I shall find life."

I set off, but it was too dark even to see the way. I advanced slowly, as one does in a forest, recognising the streets by counting them. In front of the Crédit Lyonnais a dog growled. I turned up the Rue de Grammont and lost my way. I wandered about, and then I recognised the Bourse by the iron railings around it. The whole of Paris was sleeping, a deep, terrifying sleep. In the distance a cab rumbled, one solitary cab, perhaps it was the one which had passed me a while back. I tried to reach it, going in the direction of the noise, through streets that were lonely and dark, dark

and sombre as death. Again I lost my way. Where was I? What nonsense to put out the lights so soon! Not one person passing by. Not one late reveller, not one thief, not even the mewing of an amorous cat? Nothing.

Where on earth were the police? I said to myself: "I will shout and they will come." I shouted. There was no answer. I called more loudly. My voice vanished without an echo, weak, muffled, stifled by the night, the impenetrable night. I yelled: "Help! Help! Help!" My desperate cry remained unanswered. What time was it? I pulled out my watch, but I had no matches. I listened to the gentle tick-tick of the little mechanism with a strange and unfamiliar pleasure. It seemed to be a living thing. I felt less lonely. What a mystery! I resumed my walk like a blind man, feeling my way along the wall with my stick, and every moment I raised my eyes to the heavens, hoping that day would dawn at last. But the sky was dark, all dark, more profoundly dark than the city.

What could the time be? It seemed to me I had been walking an infinite length of time, for my legs were giving way beneath me, my breast was heaving and I was suffering horribly from hunger. I decided to ring at the first street door. I pulled the copper bell and it rang sonorously through the house. It sounded strangely, as if that vibrating noise were alone in the house. I waited. There was no answer. The door did not open. I rang again. I waited again — nothing! I got frightened! I ran to the next house, and, twenty times in succession, I rang the bells in the dark corridors where

the concierge was supposed to sleep, but he did not awake. I went on further, pulling the bells and the knockers with all my strength, kicking and knocking with my hand and stick on the doors, which remained obstinately closed.

Suddenly I perceived that I had reached the Halles. The market was deserted, not a sound, not a movement, not a cart, not a man, not a bundle of flowers or vegetables — it was empty, motionless, abandoned, dead. I was seized with a horrible terror. What was happening? Oh, my God, what was happening?

I set off again. But the time? The time? Who would tell me the time? Not a clock struck in the churches or the public buildings. I thought: "I will open the glass of my watch and feel the hands with my fingers." I pulled out my watch. . . . It was not going. . . . It had stopped. Nothing more, nothing more, not a ripple in the city, not a light, not the slightest suspicion of a sound in the air. Nothing! Nothing more! not even the distant rumbling of a cab! Nothing more. I had reached the quays, and a cold chill rose from the river. Was the Seine still flowing? I wanted to know, I found the steps and went down. I could not hear the current rushing under the bridge. . . . A few more steps. . . . Then sand. . . . Mud . . . then water. I dipped my hand into it. It was flowing . . . flowing . . . cold . . . cold . . . cold . . . almost frozen . . . almost dried up . . . almost dead.

I fully realised that I should never have the strength to come up, and that I was going to die there . . . in my turn, of hunger, fatigue and cold.

TRAVELLING

Saint-Agnès, 6th May.

My Dear Friend,

You asked me to write to you often, and particularly to tell you what I had seen. You also asked me to search through my memories of travel and find some of those short anecdotes which one hears from a peasant met by the way, from some hotel-keeper, or some passing stranger, and which remain in the memory like the key to a country. You believe that a landscape sketched in a few lines, or a short story told in a few words, reveals the true character of a country, makes it live, visibly and dramatically. I shall try to do as you wish. From time to time I will send you letters, in which I shall not mention ourselves, but only the horizon and the people who move on it. Now I begin.

Spring, it seems to me, is a season when one should eat and drink landscapes. It is the season for sensations, as the autumn is the season for thought. In spring the country stirs the body; in autumn it penetrates the mind.

This year I wanted to inhale orange-blossoms, and I set out for the South at the time when everybody comes back from there. I passed through

Monaco, the town of pilgrims, the rival of Mecca and Jerusalem, without leaving my money in anybody else's pocket, and I ascended the high hills beneath a canopy of lemon, orange and olive trees.

Did you ever sleep in a field of orange trees in bloom? The air which one inhales deliciously is a quintessence of perfumes. This powerful and sweet smell, as savoury as a sweetmeat, seems to penetrate one, to impregnate, to intoxicate, to induce languor, to bring about a dreamy and somnolent torpor. It is like opium prepared by fairy hands and not by chemists.

This is a country of gorges. The sides of the mountains are seamed and slashed all over, and in these winding crevices grow veritable forests of lemon trees. At intervals, where the abrupt ravine stops at a sort of ledge, man has fashioned reservoirs which catch the water from the rain storms. They are great holes with smooth walls, which offer no projection to catch the hand of those who fall.

I was walking slowly through one of these rising valleys, looking through the leaves at the bright fruit still remaining on the branches. The narrow gorge made the heavy perfumes of the flowers more penetrating; in there the air seemed dense because of them. I felt tired and wanted to sit down. A few drops of water rolled on the grass, I thought a spring must be near, and I climbed higher to find it. But I reached the edge of one of these huge, deep reservoirs. I sat down cross-legged and remained dreaming in front of the hole, which seemed to be full of ink, so black and stagnant was the water in it. Down below, through the branches, I

could see, like splashes, bits of the Mediterranean, blindingly dazzling. But my glance constantly returned to this vast and sombre hole which seemed uninhabited by any form of water life, its surface was so still.

Suddenly a voice made me start. An old gentleman, looking for flowers (for this country is the richest in Europe for botanists), asked me:

"Are you a relative of those poor children?"

I looked at him in astonishment.

"What children?"

Then he seemed embarrassed and answered with a bow:

"I beg your pardon. Seeing you so absorbed in that reservoir I imagined you were thinking of the awful drama which took place there."

I wanted to know all about it, and I asked him to tell me the story.

It is a very gloomy and heart-breaking story, my dear, and very commonplace, at the same time. It is simply like an incident from the daily papers. I do not know whether my emotion is to be attributed to the dramatic way in which it was told to me, to the mountain background, or to the contrast between the joyous flowers and sunshine and this dark, murderous hole. My heart was torn and my nerves shaken by this story, which may not seem so terribly poignant to you, perhaps, as you read it in your room, without seeing the scene in which the drama is laid.

It was in the spring a few years back. Two little boys often used to play on the edge of this cistern,

while their tutor read a book, lying under a tree. Now, one hot afternoon, a piercing cry aroused the man, who was dozing, and the noise of water splashing after a fall caused him to get up immediately. The younger of the two children, aged eleven years, was yelling, standing near the reservoir, whose troubled, rippling surface had closed over the elder, who had just fallen in while running along the stone ledge.

The distracted tutor, without waiting, without thinking, jumped into the depths, and did not appear again, having struck his head against the bottom. At the same moment, the little boy, who had come to the surface, was waving his arms to his brother. Then the child who was on dry land lay down and stretched out, while the other tried to swim, to reach the wall, and soon four little hands seized and held each other, clutching in a convulsive grip. Both felt the keen joy of being restored to life, the thrill of a peril that has passed. The elder tried to climb up, but could not, the wall being steep, and the younger, being too weak, was slowly slipping towards the hole. Then they remained motionless, seized again with terror, and waited.

The smaller boy grasped the hand of the older with all his might, and wept nervously, saying: "I can't pull you up. I can't pull you up." Then, suddenly he began to shout: "Help! Help!" But his piping voice hardly pierced the dome of foliage above their heads. They remained there for a long time, for hours and hours, face to face, these two children, with the same thought, the same fear, the awful dread lest one of them, becoming exhausted,

should loosen his weakened grip. And they kept on calling in vain. At length, the elder, who was shaking with cold, said to the younger: "I can't go on. I am going to fall. Good-bye, little brother." And the other repeated, with heaving breath: "Not yet, not yet; wait!" Evening came on, quiet evening, its stars reflected in the water. The elder boy, who was fainting, said: "Let go one hand, I want to give you my watch." He had received it as a present a few days before, and since then it had been the chief care of his heart. He succeeded in getting it, handed it up, and the younger, who was sobbing, placed it on the grass beside him.

It was now completely dark. The two unfortunate creatures were overcome and could scarcely hold out much longer. The bigger boy, feeling that his hour had come, murmured again: "Good-bye, little brother. Kiss papa and mamma." His paralysed fingers relaxed. He sank and did not come up again. . . .

The younger, who was left alone, began to cry madly: "Paul! Paul!" but his brother never returned. Then he dashed away, falling over stones, shaken by the most terrible anguish that can wring the heart of a child, and arrived in the drawing-room where his parents were waiting. He lost his way again when taking them to the reservoir. He could not find the way. Finally he recognised the place. "It is there; yes, it is there." The cistern had to be emptied, and the owner would not allow this, as he needed the water for his lemon trees. In the end the two bodies were recovered, but not until the next day.

You see, my dear, that this is just a common newspaper story. But if you had seen the hole, you would have been moved to the bottom of your heart at the thought of this child's agony, hanging on to his brother's arm, of this interminable struggle on the part of two children accustomed only to laugh and play, and by that simple little detail: the giving over of the watch. I said to myself: "Fate preserve me from ever receiving such a relic!" I do not know of anything more terrible than the memory that clings to a familiar object that one cannot get rid of. Think that every time he touches this sacred watch, the survivor will see the horrible scene again, the cistern, the wall, the calm water, and the distorted face of his brother, still alive but as surely lost as though he were already dead. During his whole life, at every moment that vision will be there, evoked the moment the tip of his finger touches his watch pocket.

I felt sad until evening. I went off, still going higher, leaving the region of orange trees for the regions of olive trees only, and the latter for the pine-tree region. Then I entered a valley of stones, reaching the ruins of an old castle, built, they say, in the tenth century, by a Saracen chief, a wise man, who got baptised for love of a girl.

Mountains everywhere around me, and in front of me the sea, the sea on which there is a scarcely visible patch: Corsica, or rather the shadow of Corsica.

But on the mountain tops reddened by the setting sun, in the vast heavens, and on the sea, on the

whole superb horizon I had come to admire, I saw only two poor children, one lying along the edge of a hole filled with black water, the other sunk up to his neck, held together by their hands, weeping face to face, distracted. And all the time I seemed to hear a feeble voice saying: "Good-bye, little brother. I give you my watch."

This letter will seem very lugubrious to you, my dear friend. Another time I shall try to be more cheerful.